

SARAH

BERNHARDT

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

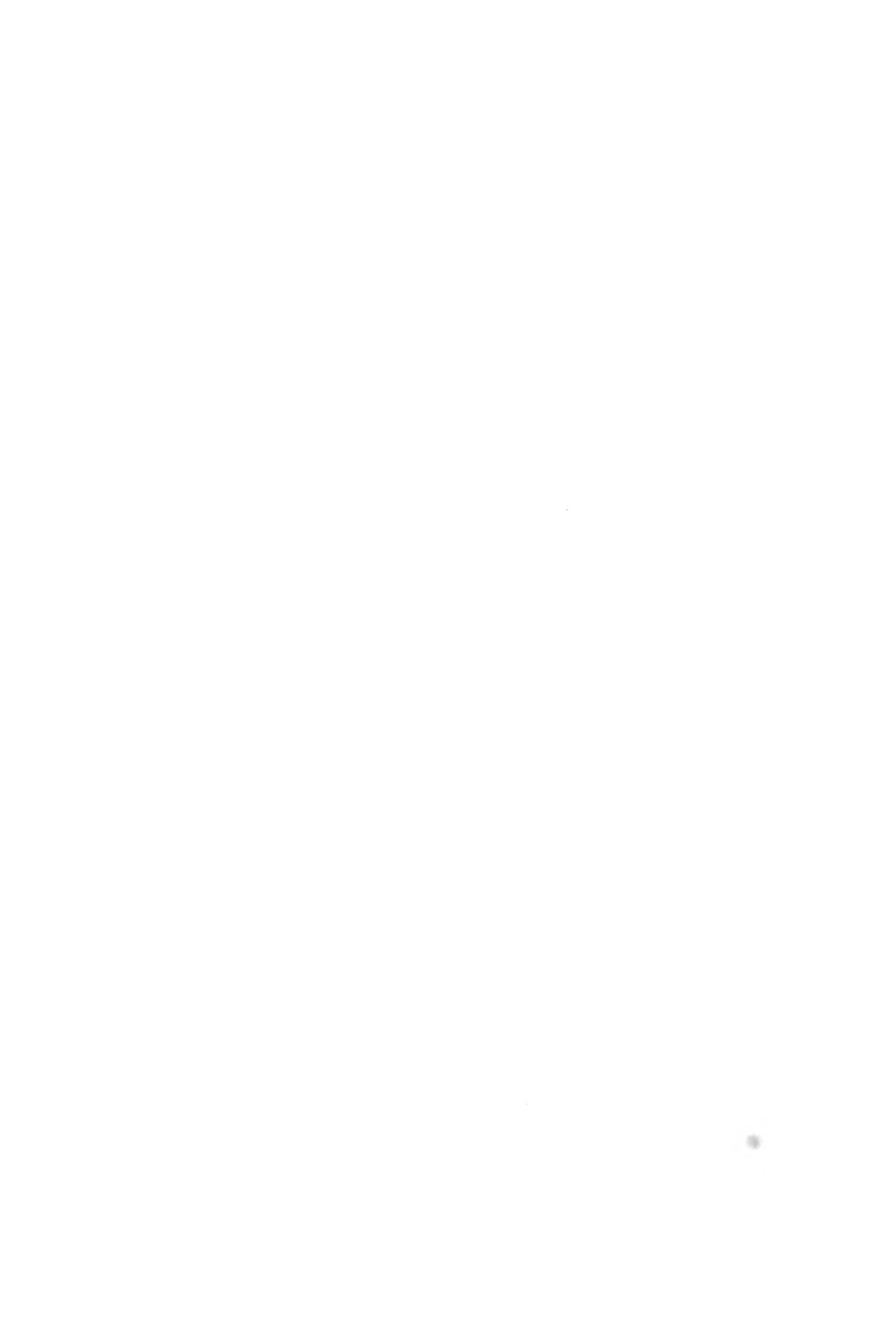


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JULES HURET.

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SARAH BERNHARDT



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt.

SARAH BERNHARDT

BY
JULES HURET

WITH A PREFACE BY
EDMOND ROSTAND

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY
G. A. RAPER

WITH FIFTY-FIVE ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

MY DEAR HURET,

You have given me an attack of vertigo. I have been reading your biography of our illustrious friend. Its rapid, nervous style, its accumulation of dates and facts, its hurried rush of scenery and events flying past as though seen from an express train, all help to attain what I imagine must have been your object—to give the reader vertigo. I have got it.

I knew all these things, but I had forgotten them. They are so many that no one even attempts to reckon them up. We are accustomed to admire Sarah. "An extraordinary woman," we say, without at all realizing how true the remark is. And when we find ourselves suddenly confronted with an epic narrative such as yours; with such a series of battles and victories, expeditions and conquests, we

stand amazed. We expected that there was more to tell than we knew, but not quite so much more! Yes, here is something we had quite forgotten, and here again is something more! All the early struggles and difficulties and unfair opposition! All the adventures and freaks of fancy! Twenty triumphs and ten escapades on a page! You cannot turn the leaves without awakening an echo of fame. Your brain reels. There is something positively alarming about this impetuous feminine hand that wields sceptre, thyrsus, dagger, fan, sword, bauble, banner, sculptor's chisel, and horsewhip. It is overwhelming. You begin to doubt. But all this is told us by Huret, or, in other words, by History, and we believe. No other life could ever have been so full of activity. The poet I was used to admire in her the Queen of Attitude and the Princess of Gesture; I wonder now whether the other poet I am ought not to still more admire in her the Lady of Energy.

What a way she has of being both legendary and modern! Her golden hair is a link between her and fairyland, and do not words change into pearls and diamonds as they fall from her lips? Has she not worn the fairy's sky-blue robe, and is not her

voice the song of the lark at heaven's gate? She may be an actress following an *impresario*, but she is none the less a star fallen from the sky of the Thousand and One Nights, and something of the mysterious blue ether still floats about her. But just as the enchanted bark gives way to the great Atlantic liner, just as the car drawn by flying frogs and the carriage made out of a pumpkin vanish before the Sarah Bernhardt saloon-car, so in this story of to-day, intelligence, independence, and intrepidity have replaced the miraculous interventions in the tales of long ago. This heroine has no protecting fairy but herself. Sarah is her own godmother. Inflexible will is her only magic wand. To guide her through so many strange and wonderful events to her final apotheosis, she has no genius but her own.

It seems to me, Jules Huret, that the life of Mme. Sarah Bernhardt will perhaps form the greatest marvel of the nineteenth century. It will develop into a legend. To describe her tours round the world, with their ever-changing scenes and actors, their beauties and absurdities, to make the locomotives and steamers speak, to portray the swelling of seas and the rustling of robes, to fill up the intervals

of heroic recitative with speaking, singing, shouting choruses of poets, savages, kings, and wild animals : this would need a new Homer built up of Théophile Gautier, Jules Verne, and Rudyard Kipling.

All this, or something like it, courses through my brain while my attack of giddiness wears off. Now I feel better ; I am myself again, and I try to decide what to say to you, my dear friend, in conclusion. After reflection, here it is—

I have had an attack of vertigo. There is no doubt about that. But all these things that I have known only in the telling—all these journeys, these changing skies, these adoring hearts, these flowers, these jewels, these embroideries, these millions, these lions, these one hundred and twelve *rôles*, these eighty trunks, this glory, these caprices, these cheering crowds hauling her carriage, this crocodile drinking champagne—all these things, I say, which I have never seen, astonish, dazzle, delight, and move me less than something else which I have often seen : this—

A brougham stops at a door ; a woman, enveloped in furs, jumps out, threads her way with a smile through the crowd attracted by the jingling of the bell on the harness, and mounts a winding stair ;

plunges into a room crowded with flowers and heated like a hothouse ; throws her little beribboned handbag with its apparently inexhaustible contents into one corner, and her bewinged hat into another ; takes off her furs and instantaneously dwindles into a mere scabbard of white silk ; rushes on to a dimly-lighted stage and immediately puts life into a whole crowd of listless, yawning, loitering folk ; dashes backwards and forwards, inspiring every one with her own feverish energy ; goes into the prompter's box, arranges her scenes, points out the proper gesture and intonation, rises up in wrath and insists on everything being done over again ; shouts with fury ; sits down, smiles, drinks tea and begins to rehearse her own part ; draws tears from case-hardened actors who thrust their enraptured heads out of the wings to watch her ; returns to her room, where the decorators are waiting, demolishes their plans and reconstructs them ; collapses, wipes her brow with a lace handkerchief and thinks of fainting ; suddenly rushes up to the fifth floor, invades the premises of the astonished costumier, rummages in the wardrobes, makes up a costume, pleats and adjusts it ; returns to her room and teaches the figurantes how to dress their hair ; has a piece read

to her while she makes bouquets ; listens to hundreds of letters, weeps over some tale of misfortune, and opens the inexhaustible little chinking handbag ; confers with an English perruquier ; returns to the stage to superintend the lighting of a scene, objurgates the lamps and reduces the electrician to a state of temporary insanity ; sees a super who has blundered the day before, remembers it, and overwhelms him with her indignation ; returns to her room for dinner ; sits down to table, splendidly pale with fatigue ; ruminates her plans ; eats with peals of Bohemian laughter ; has no time to finish ; dresses for the evening performance while the manager reports from the other side of a curtain ; acts with all her heart and soul ; discusses business between the acts ; remains at the theatre after the performance, and makes arrangements until three o'clock in the morning ; does not make up her mind to go until she sees her staff respectfully endeavouring to keep awake ; gets into her carriage ; huddles herself into her furs and anticipates the delights of lying down and resting at last ; bursts out laughing on remembering that some one is waiting to read her a five-act play ; returns home, listens to the piece, becomes excited, weeps, accepts it, finds she

cannot sleep, and takes advantage of the opportunity to study a part !

This, my dear Huret, is what seems to me more extraordinary than anything. This is the Sarah I have always known. I never made the acquaintance of the Sarah with the coffin and the alligators. The only Sarah I know is the one who works. She is the greater.

EDMOND ROSTAND.

Paris, April 25, 1899.



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SARAH BERNHARDT

ON the 10th February, 1898, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt telephoned to me to come and see her. The occasion was a serious one. She told me that on the following day she would leave her house in the Boulevard Pereire and enter a private hospital in the Rue d'Armaillé, where she was to undergo a painful operation. For some time past she had suffered from a dull, aching pain, and during a performance of *Les Mauvais Bergers*, in which she had to fall flat on her face, she experienced a sharper pang than usual. She ought to have at once begun to take care of herself and avoid all fatigue, but when she returned to her dressing-room, her first act was to fall on her face again to make sure that what she had felt was not mere imagination. She went on making sure in this way through the remaining forty performances of *Les Mauvais Bergers*. Finally, however, she called in Dr. Pozzi, who immediately discovered serious

internal trouble, and informed her that an operation must be performed in June. In spite of this, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt organized a provincial tour; but her condition suddenly became worse, and Dr. Pozzi decided that the operation must take place almost immediately.

A few days before the date fixed, the actress decided to break the news to her son. She did this on the eve of his duel with M. Champsaur, of which, of course, he had not told her.

"You can imagine what a blow it was to him," Mme. Sarah Bernhardt remarked to me.

"Were you not afraid?" I asked—I don't exactly know why, the great artiste being as gay and alert as usual.

"Afraid?" she replied. "No; there's no danger with Pozzi. It's just a stroke of bad luck," she added bravely, with a smile. "I had a wonderful run of success last year, too much in fact, and now this is a set-off."

"When is the operation to be?" I asked.

"On Wednesday. Don't forget to come and see me when I am convalescent. I will tell you all sorts of fine stories, so that you won't get bored."

The operation was perfectly successful, and on the 1st of May, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt, who was then quite out of danger, was allowed to see her friends on condition that they should be very few and their visits very short. As one of these friends, I spent half-an-hour in the sick-room.

The hospital, situated in the Ternes quarter of Paris, is a species of small private house with a courtyard in front, and is as little like a medical establishment as can be imagined. The patient's room, scrupulously neat and clean, was on the first floor, overlooking a small garden containing a few large trees. The great artiste was lying on a small iron bed, her fair hair completely covering her pillow. She was smiling and gay, as usual; perhaps a little paler than her wont, that was all. My mind involuntarily reverted to Lady Macbeth, Doña Sol, Maria de Neubourg, Phèdre, and Froufrou, and I thought of all the triumphs, heroic ardour, wild passion and divine melancholy of thirty years of art and crowded life abruptly cut short and laid low under the surgeon's knife. But the wonderful vitality of this rare creature, who has always vanquished every combination of adverse circumstances, had once more got the better of misfortune.

"I kept on telling myself every day," she said, "that this is the price I have to pay for the great day I had two years ago. I always said something of this kind was bound to come. Ask Seylor if I didn't."

Mlle. Seylor, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt's faithful companion, who has not been absent from her a day for the last ten years, had just entered the room.

"Didn't I tell you so, Seylor?" the patient continued. "When you kissed me and said how happy you were over my 'glory,' as you called it, didn't I

say, 'Everything has its bad side as well as its good. See if I don't pay dearly for to-day!'"

And a shadow of melancholy came over the great artiste's features, but soon disappeared. As the song of a bird arose from the garden, she exclaimed—

"Listen to that blackbird; isn't it delightful? He sings every morning just as if he had been put there on purpose for me."

Speaking of the operation, she said—

"It lasted an hour and a half, but I did not feel the slightest pain either then or afterwards. I have had no fever at all. At the present moment my temperature is not above 97°. For two days the chloroform rather annoyed me, and I had touches of nausea, but that was all. The only pain I had was what I inflicted on my son by running the risk. Poor boy! it's the first time I have ever made him suffer of my own free will!"

My eyes wandered round the room. Apart from a few roses and orchids, there was nothing on the mantelpiece and tables but portraits of Maurice Bernhardt as a child, as a youth, and as he is to-day. There was also a marble bust of him.

"Look!" said Sarah, "there are his first shoe and his first shirt."

Hanging from the corner of a mirror were a tiny little white patent-leather shoe, all shrivelled by time, and a shirt that might have fitted a doll.

"They never leave me," she added. "When I travel, I take them with me, and I felt I must

have them here. I believe they bring me good luck."

Before taking leave I inquired as to the probable duration of the convalescence.

"At the end of the week," was the reply, "I shall be able to get up. Within ten days I shall take a walk in the garden, and within a fortnight I am to go to St. Germain and complete my convalescence at the Pavillon Henri IV. Come and see me soon and we will talk."

I took advantage of the permission, and in the course of my visits I was able to take down, from the great artiste's own lips, the information contained in these pages, by far the greater part of which information will be new to the public.

"I was born in Paris," Mme. Sarah Bernhardt told me, "at No. 265 Rue St. Honoré, in the house also occupied by my old friend, Mme. Guérard, who is still bright and hearty in spite of her seventy-six years. She saw me come into the world, and she was present at the birth of my son Maurice, and of my grand-daughter.

"My mother, as you know, was a Dutch Jewess. She was fair, short, and round, with a long body and short legs, but she had a pretty face and beautiful blue eyes. She spoke French badly, and with a strong foreign accent. She had fourteen children, among them being two pairs of twins. I was the eleventh child. I was put out to nurse with a *concierge*, and the arrangement worked well enough as

long as I was quite small; but I began to find my confinement wearisome, and one day, when I was at the window of the *concierge's* room—you know those little arched windows that are still to be seen



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt and her son Maurice at the age of five.

in the entresols of old houses—I saw my mother coming in through the *porte-cochère*, and I fell out of the window in my haste to reach her! She realized the situation, and I was taken home, where I remained several years with my mother and

sisters. My education had to be thought of, and as my father insisted on my being baptized, I was sent to the Augustinian convent at Grandchamp, Versailles. Thus, at the age of twelve I became a Christian, was baptized, received my first communion on the following day, and was confirmed on the day after with three of my sisters. I became very pious. I was seized with an extraordinary, passionate adoration for the Virgin. For a long time I cherished a tiny gold image of her which some one had given me. One day it was stolen, to my great grief.

“I was both reserved and fractious. My mother had little love for me; she preferred my sisters. I was seldom taken out. Sometimes I was left at the convent during the holidays. I used to feel sad at being thus neglected, but the feeling of depression soon wore off, and the spirit of fun in my nature got the upper hand. One day, when we heard that all the schools in France, except ours, had been given bonbons on the occasion of the baptism of the Prince Imperial, I proposed to several other girls that we should run away, and I undertook to manage it. Being on good terms with the sister in charge of the gate, I went into her lodge and pretended to have a hole in my dress under the armpit. To let her examine the hole I raised my arm towards the cord communicating with the gate, and whilst she was looking at my dress I pulled the cord, my accomplices rushed out, and I followed them. Our

entire stock of provisions, ammunition, and sinews of war consisted of a few clothes, three pieces of soap in a bag, and the sum of seven francs fifty centimes in money. This was to take us to the



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt and her son Maurice at the age of eleven.

other end of the world! A search had to be made for us, and as the good sisters could hardly undertake it, the police were set on our track. There was not much difficulty in finding us, as you may imagine. We were questioned, and Amelia Pluche

—I shall never forget the traitress's name—denounced me as the ringleader. I was sent home in disgrace, but, nevertheless, returned to the convent.

“On another occasion, I remember, I had climbed on to the wall separating the convent from the cemetery. A grand funeral was in progress, and the Bishop of Versailles was delivering an address to quite a crowd. I immediately began to gesticulate, shout, and sing at the top of my voice so as to interrupt the ceremony. You can imagine the scene—a child of twelve sitting astride a wall, and a bishop interrupted in the midst of a funeral oration! The scandal was great, and I was again expelled. My mother did not at all approve of these escapades, and I was severely scolded, but, owing no doubt to influence, I was received in the convent once more. Some time afterwards, having been sentenced to three days' solitary confinement for some offence, I climbed up to the top of a chestnut-tree in the garden. They sought for me in vain, and then set the watch-dog to find me. He promptly sat down at the foot of the tree and barked. My retreat was thus discovered, but there was no way of getting me down. The only man in the convent was an old gardener, who would not trust himself at such a height, and the ladders were too short. To all the sisters' commands and threats I merely replied: ‘I will die here! I want to die here!’ Finally they had to promise on oath that

I should be let off my three days' confinement, and I came down with the agility of a monkey. I was very good at gymnastics. My mother, knowing me to be delicate, urged me to take all sorts of exercise. I remember that the only prizes I ever got at the convent were for history, composition, and gymnastics.

"On my departure from Grandchamp came the question, What was I to do? I was religious, in spite of my wayward and passionate temperament. The patron saint of the convent, St. Augustin, whose portrait was displayed in every room, was my first passion, which he shared with the Virgin. I was strongly inclined to become a nun, but my ideas in this direction underwent a change soon after my departure from the convent. My mother provided me with a finishing governess, Mlle. de Brabander—a very superior woman, who had educated the Grand Duchess Marie of Russia. Mlle. de Brabander adored me. My mother had considerable difficulty in deciding what to do with me. In spite of my youth I was asked in marriage by a neighbouring glover, then by a tanner, and finally by a chemist, from whom I used to buy medicines. I refused them all! One of my mother's friends was the Duc de Morny, and he suggested that I should try the stage as a profession. My mother thought I was not sufficiently pretty; I was too thin, she considered. Nevertheless, she decided to adopt the duke's suggestion. The story of my admission to

the Conservatoire has often been told. I came with a letter of recommendation from the Duc de Morny, and I had scarcely recited two verses of La Fontaine's fable of *The Two Pigeons*, when Auber signed to me to stop and come to him.

"‘Is your name Sarah?’ he asked.

"‘Yes, sir.’

"‘Are you a Jewess?’

"‘By birth, sir, but I have been baptized.’

"‘She has been baptized,’ said Auber to the jury, ‘and it would have been a pity for such a pretty child not to be.’ Turning to me, he added, ‘You said your fable very well and you have passed.’

"Consequently I entered the Conservatoire. The next question was, in which class was I to study? Beauvallet said, ‘She will be a tragedienne.’ Regnier maintained, ‘She will be a comedienne,’ and Provost put them in agreement by declaring ‘She will be both.’ I joined Provost's class.

"I began my studies without the slightest enthusiasm. I set to work because I had been brought to the Conservatoire for that purpose, but I had neither taste nor inclination for the profession I was to enter. I went to the theatre for the first time in my life two or three days before the entrance examination. I was taken to the Théâtre Français to see *Amphitryon*. It made me cry! The stage had really no attraction for me. I often felt very unhappy at the prospect, and wept bitterly. Moreover I was horribly timid. When I discussed my

real inclinations with my dear governess, Mlle. de Brabander, I felt more disposed to study painting than anything else, but I had to give way. Mlle. de Brabander used to take me to the Conservatoire every day. My mother gave me the omnibus fare for both of us. I pocketed it and we walked, because we both hated coming into contact with all sorts of people in the omnibus. When we had enough money, that is to say, every alternate day, we took a cab, so that we could make sure of being alone. I have always had a horror of being obliged to rub shoulders with people I don't know. If I can help it, I never stay in a waiting-room or any public place where I am obliged to inhale other people's breath. In this respect I have always been ferociously unsociable.

"At the commencement of my studies at the Conservatoire, I had considerable difficulties to overcome. I inherited from my mother a serious defect in pronunciation—speaking with clenched teeth. In all the imitations of my style this point is seized upon. In my early days the defect was ten times more pronounced than it is now, and it clung to me all the time, whereas now it is only noticeable when I am nervous, generally in the first act. To cure me of the habit, the Conservatoire teachers gave me little rubber balls, which prevented me from closing my mouth. My fellow-pupils included Croizette, Lloyd, Rousseil, Dica-Petit, Léontine Massin, and Mme. Provost-Poncin.

Among the men was Coquelin, who was always very nice to me.

“At my first competitive examination I took the second prize for tragedy, and Rousseil the first. In



Mme. Guérard.

my last year I took the second prize for comedy, and Lloyd the first. I could never manage to get a first. After taking my second prize for tragedy, I stayed a year at the Conservatoire, in receipt of a salary of £75, paid by the Comédie Française,

which had views concerning me. Finally it was arranged that I should make my *début* at the Comédie in *Iphigénie*, with Mme. Devoyod as Clytemnestre. I knew no one in the company



As Junie in *Britannicus*.

except Coquelin, who had just entered it, and was as good to me as he had been at the Conservatoire. I do not remember experiencing any strong emotions except a real fear; but I do remember that when I lifted my long, thin arms—and they were thin!—for

the sacrifice, the whole audience laughed. After that I played in Scribe's *Valérie*, with Coquelin as Ambroise. Theatrical life was still uninteresting to me. I never went inside a theatre except to act. Even now, paradoxical as it may seem, I know scarcely any plays, and scarcely any artistes except such as I have encountered at the various theatres in which I have played.

"I was far from resting at the Théâtre Français. Less than a year after my *début*, my sister Regina one evening accidentally trod on Mme. Nathalie's train. Mme. Nathalie, who was one of the leading ladies, pushed the poor girl so roughly that she knocked her head against a corner and the blood came. I immediately 'went for' Mme. Nathalie, gave her a resounding smack, and called her a great stupid! The men were delighted, but the affair created a terrible scandal. The manager told me I must apologize to Mme. Nathalie. I replied—

" 'I will apologize to Mme. Nathalie if she will do the same to my little sister.'

"No arrangement could be made, and I left the House of Molière for the first time.

"Owing to this very pronounced feature in my character, no manager would have anything to do with me. A fairy extravaganza, the *Biche au Bois*, was being played at the Porte St. Martin, then managed by Marc Fournier, and I learnt that Mlle. Debay, a former Odéon star, who was playing the Princesse Désirée, had been taken ill. As the part

was in verse, I said to myself, 'Here's my chance,' and went to see Fournier, who engaged me on the spot. As I was very young, I was asked who I was, and I replied that I was an orphan. I rehearsed twice, and the date of my *début* was fixed. I sang a duet with Ugalde, who was kind enough to take the trouble of teaching me how to sing it. On the very first night it happened that my guardian was amongst the audience. He immediately recognized me and came to see me, horrified, after the first act. I implored him to say nothing to my mother, but he rushed off and brought her to the theatre. At first she would not let me finish, but finally she yielded to reason, and I played my part to the end, but that was my first and last appearance in extravaganza.

"After the Porte St. Martin came the Gymnase. In May 1863 I was engaged by Montigny to replace Victoria, Lafontaine's wife. The piece was a vaudeville in rhymes, and I remember having to sing—

'Un baiser? Non, non!'

"It was too absurd!

"I was very useful to Montigny. I had a marvellous memory, and shrank from no part, however difficult. I never really loved the stage, but as it was my profession I did not mean to let the grass grow under my feet. I was determined to get to the front. One after another I played in



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt when a girl.



Le Père de la Débutante, *Le Démon du Jeu* by Theodore Barrière, *La Maison sans Enfants* by Dumanoir, *L'Etourneau* by Bayard and Laya, *Le Premier Pas* by Labiche and Delacour, and *Un Mari qui lance sa Femme* by Raymond Deslandes. In this last piece (April 28, 1864) I was a Russian princess, with nothing to do but eat and dance all the time. This idiotic part disgusted me to such an extent that I vowed not to play it a second time. The day after the first performance I went off to Spain! In the morning I locked my mother in her room so that she could not interfere with me, and off I set with my accomplice, a maid who had been discharged by my mother. We went to Marseilles and got on board a steamer. The only other passenger was a rich wine-merchant from the south of France. You see how practical we were! My great object was to go to Madrid—I was mad to see Spain and its museums—and after encountering a fearful storm we landed at Alicante. I was dreadfully sick, but fortunately I had brought my little golden Virgin, and she gave me hope and consolation.

“My mother had set the police on my track, but in vain. At last, however, we were starved out. At the end of two months I had seen all I wanted to see in Spain, and as all my money was gone I was obliged to write to my mother for supplies. She made me wait some little time, but finally sent them, and I returned to Paris.

“One day I encountered Camille Doucet, who, as I told you before, was a friend of our family.

“‘Well, are you as naughty as ever?’ he asked.



As Zanetto in *Le Passant*.

‘Have you been slapping any more of your confrères lately?’

“I explained that I had had no opportunity, and he advised me to apply to the Odéon, then



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt in *François le Champi*.
(From a water-colour by Baudoin.)



managed by Chilly and Duquesnel. Chilly was not much inclined to engage me, but Duquesnel seemed anxious to do so. Finally he had his way, and it was decided that I should appear as Junie in *Britannicus* (January 14, 1867). Taillade, who played Nero, insisted at rehearsal that I should kiss the hem of his garment. I imagine he must have set about obtaining this act of superfluous civility from me rather badly; at any rate, I gave him a sound box on the ear. Camille Doucet must have thought there was no doubt about my vocation.

"My second appearance was in *Le Jeu de l'Amour et du Hasard*. It was a hideous 'frost'! I remember wearing a dress with white, blue, and red stripes to give me a Louis XV. appearance! Moreover I was as thin as a lath and absolutely unsuited to the part of Sylvia. Her airs and graces were never meant for me.

"My first success at the Odéon was as Zacharie in *Athalie*. I recited the chorus of women, and this was the first occasion on which I really impressed the public. My reception was, I venture to say, really a triumph. In *Le Marquis de Villemer* I next played a wretched part—a thirty-five-year-old baroness. I wept all the time. George Sand, who had noticed me, consoled me and promised that I should appear in *L'Autre*, which she had just finished; and she kept her word. Next came *Le Passant*. Chilly had been induced with great difficulty to have this piece played as a benefit

performance. He had no faith in it, and thought it tiresome and without a future. He had so little confidence in its success that he absolutely refused to pay for the costumes, and Agar and I were obliged to order our own and settle the bills out of our own pockets. You know how popu-



In Le Drame de la Rue de la Paix.

lar Coppée's little piece became. Agar and I played it twice before the Court, with immense success!¹

¹ Mme. Bernhardt afterwards appeared as Armande in *Les Femmes Savantes*, in *Les Arrêts* (a one-act piece by M. de Boissières), in *François le Champi*, *Le Testament de César Girodot*, *King Lear*, *Le Legs*, *Le Drame de la Rue de la Paix*, by Adolphe Belot (1869), and *La Loterie du Mariage*.

"*Kean* was being prepared at the Odéon. Chilly wanted the part of Anne Damby to be given to Jane Essler, and Dumas had already promised it to Antonine. Duquesnel advised me to go and see Dumas, and not to leave the house without a written authority to at least rehearse the part. I well remember going to see Dumas. The door was opened by his daughter, and I found Dumas in his shirt-sleeves, with a woman leaning on his shoulder—Oceana I believe she was. I timidly explained the object of my visit. He listened, looked at me, and said—

"‘You would do very nicely, but I have promised the part to Jane Essler.’

"I persisted in my request, and he confessed that he had also undertaken to give the *rôle* to Antonine.

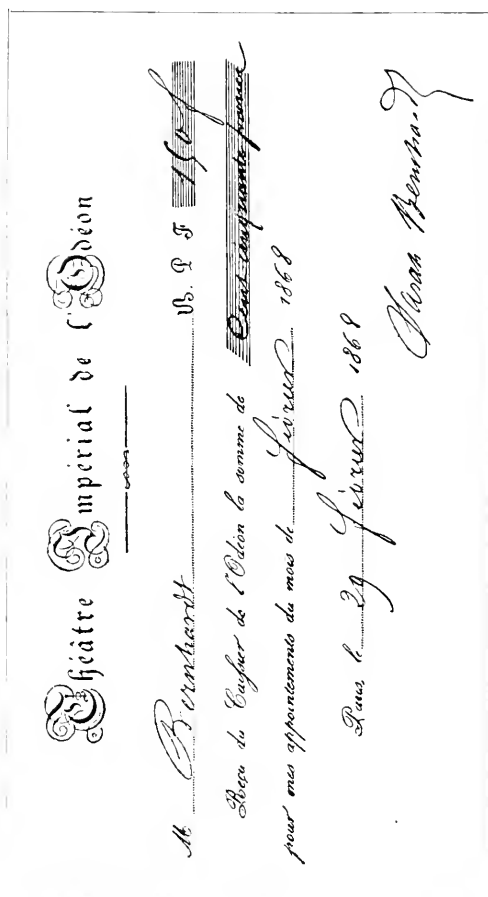
"Then, I said, ‘As you have promised it to two you may just as well promise it to three.’

"Fortunately I had learnt the part, and I began to recite it to him, inwardly repeating Duquesnel’s words: ‘Don’t leave him before you get a letter.’ Then I urged him again to let me rehearse the part, if only for a week.

"Finally Dumas had enough of it, and gave me a letter for Chilly, to this effect: ‘Jane Essler is to play Anne Damby, but you can let the bearer rehearse for a few days.’

"When the others saw me rehearsing for the part, there was a sensation. The end of it was that I kept the part and played it with very, very

great success. A well-known incident happened at the *première*. Dumas came into his box accom-



panied by Oceana, and for three-quarters of an hour the students shouted 'A la porte!' to such

purpose that Dumas was obliged to take the woman out, put her in a cab, and return to his box, wildly cheered by the students. Their hostility was solely against the woman who had forced this great man to make such a scandalous exhibition of himself.

“Next came *Le Bâtard* by Alphonse Touroude, and *L'Autre* by George Sand (September 1869), neither of which has any interesting souvenirs connected with it.”

The war broke out, and ambulances were soon being established everywhere. Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt decided to fit one up at the Odéon at her own expense, and on September 30 she set to work. Twenty-two beds were erected, long white curtains were hung at the windows and *portières* over the doors, linen was neatly piled in cupboards, the dispensary was provided with bottles and drugs, and the cellars were filled with wood and coal. All the arrangements having been planned beforehand and carried out without delay, everything was completed in forty-eight hours, and there was nothing more to do but wait for the patients. They came soon enough! Day and night Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt and her aides-de-camp were kept at work. One of her first patients was M. Porel (now the manager of the Vaudeville theatre, and the husband of Mme. Réjane), who was slightly wounded by a fragment of shell. Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt busied herself not only with the infirmary but with the

office. The ambulance being a military one, and having to supply daily reports to the central establishment at the Val-de-Grâce hospital, Mlle. Bernhardt carefully noted all particulars of the patients admitted and discharged, and kept all her accounts with remarkable exactitude.

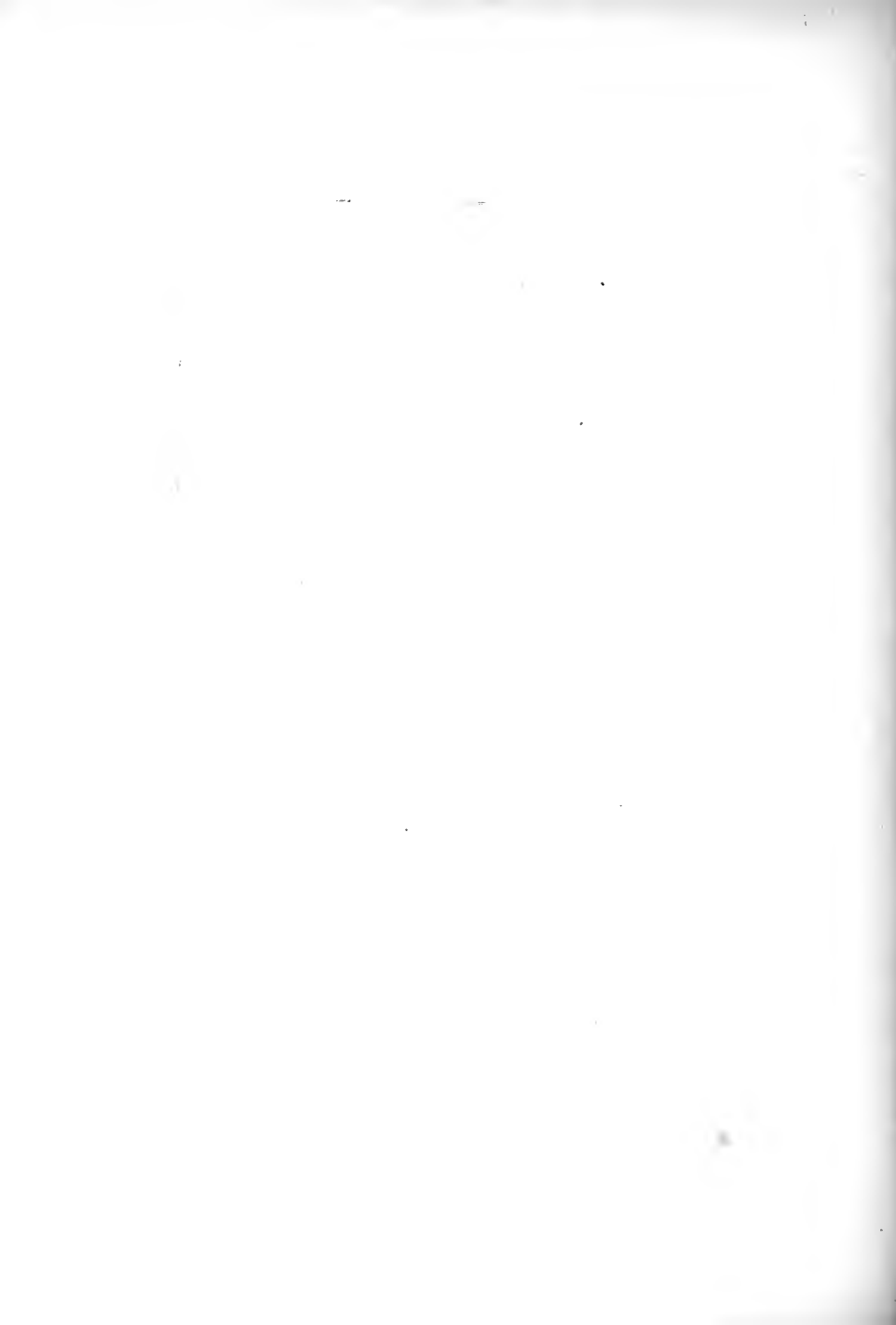
The war and the Commune over, the theatres re-opened their doors, and M. André Theuriet entrusted Mlle. Bernhardt with the principal rôle in *Jean Marie*, which had just been accepted at the Odéon. Her success was striking, and she has kept this little piece in her *répertoire*, reviving it time after time in her tours, just as she has done with *Phèdre*.

Nothing is more curious and instructive than to note the opinions of the theatrical critics on Sarah Bernhardt from this period onward. Sometimes she was lauded to the skies; at other times attempts were made to crush her by severe and often unjust condemnation. To begin with, let us take this expression of opinion given by the late M. Francisque Sarcey on October 14, 1871—

If I experienced great pleasure in seeing *Jean Marie*, it was because the principal part was taken by Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt. No one could be more innocently poetic than this young lady. She will become a great comedienne, and she is already an admirable artiste. Everything she does has a special savour of its own. It is impossible to say whether she is pretty. She is thin, and her expression is sad, but she has queenly grace, charm, and the inexpressible *je ne sais quoi*. She is an artiste by nature, and an incomparable one. There is no one like her at the Comédie Française.



As Cordelia in *King Lear*.



Ten days afterwards came the first performance of *Fais ce que dois*, a one-act piece in verse, by M. François Coppée. The same critic dismissed the matter by saying—"The two sisters Bernhardt, Sarah and Jeanne, have two such insignificant parts that they can make nothing out of them." On November 4, M. Sarcey wrote, in reference to the impending departure of Mlle. Favart from the Comédie Française—"Her place should most certainly be taken by Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt. Any other choice would be a monstrous injustice." In spite of this impassioned declaration, the Odéon kept its prey. In the same month she appeared in *La Baronne*, by MM. Charles Edmond and Edouard Fournier. By this time it was generally recognized that the antique peplum suited her better than modern dress. Two months afterwards (January 1872) the indefatigable young actress created the part of Mlle. Aïssé in Louis Bouilhet's four-act play of that name. The critic Paul de Saint-Victor treated her with considerable severity.

Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt, he wrote, played Aïssé very indifferently. She was weak and despondent, with no energy and no voice. In passages requiring the utmost fire and passion she did not rise above a monotonous sing-song. She cannot be said to have killed the piece, for it had no life in it, but another actress could perhaps have given it a more tragical and impressive ending. Mlle. Bernhardt makes it die of languor and inanition.

Mlle. Bernhardt now arrived at one of the turning-points in her life. Victor Hugo, who had

returned to France on the downfall of the Empire, was superintending the revival of his dramas, and MM. Chilly and Duquesnel decided to bring out *Ruy Blas*. One evening there was a big dinner at



As Doña Sol in *Hernani*.

Victor Hugo's, and the guests set themselves to work to arrange the cast. Every *rôle* was satisfactorily allotted except that of the Queen, on which there was some difference of opinion. M. Paul Meurice strongly supported Mlle. Jane Essler.

Victor Hugo, observing that Busnach had taken no part in the discussion, asked him his opinion.

"*Ma foi*," exclaimed the dramatist, "I think Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt is the only possible choice, and I strongly advise you to have her."

Busnach argued his case with so much warmth that on the following day Victor Hugo asked the artiste to go over the part with him, and accepted her on the spot. Sarah's success was unmistakable. Auguste Vitu wrote of her in the *Figaro* (February 19, 1872)—

Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt displayed feeling, grace, and even passion in the comparatively small part of Doña Maria. If, at the beginning of the second act, she could succeed in getting rid of the dismal, psalm-like intonation which she erroneously regards as the proper way to express melancholy, she would perfect a remarkable creation, which does her honour.

M. Sarcey was warmer in his praise—

No rôle was ever better adapted to Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt's talents than that of this melancholy queen. She possesses the gift of resigned and patient dignity. Her diction is so wonderfully clear and distinct that not a syllable is missed. At the same time it is hardly powerful enough for the passionate outbursts in the last act, but there is a great deal of warmth and feeling in the impassioned passages at the close.

Immediately after this success the newspapers began to urge M. Perrin, the manager of the Théâtre Français, to engage the brilliant star which had just made its appearance in the theatrical firmament. Sarah was, however, bound by her engagement at the Odéon, and the management would not

hear of releasing her. Offers were made to her, and she decided to take legal proceedings to have the contract set aside. The decision was against her, and she was obliged to pay the Odéon the not excessive indemnity of £200. In this way she returned to the scene of her *début*. The event excited a great deal of comment in the theatrical world, and especially, as may be imagined, in the House of Molière. But the success of *Ruy Blas* and *Le Passant* silenced the envious tongues, and her comrades soon found that they would have to reckon with the new *pensionnaire*. She set to work with astonishing ardour, and made her appearance on November 5, 1872, in *Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle*. There could be no doubt of her possessing the fire of genius, or of her ability to charm and touch her audience. There was still a certain want of power, but she was full of happy inspirations. Paul de Saint-Victor, however, persisted in opposing her. He wrote—

Mlle. Bernhardt made a very indifferent *début* as Gabrielle. The artificial reputation she made at the Odéon and brought with her to the Comédie Française does not stand examination. There is a deadly monotony about her diction. Everything is on the same level. The only tone in her voice is the low and plaintive one. When the action of the play quickens and the passions of the various characters begin to assert themselves, she dwindles away to nothing, and loses all the fire, force, and colour that the part ought to have. What good work can Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt do at the Théâtre Français? The idea of giving her a leading part in a modern drama is out of the question. The most she can do is to act as a feeble substitute for Mlle. Favart. The

weakness of her voice and the insufficiency of her talents exclude her from leading tragedy parts, and I do not see that she can take her place anywhere except in the background. She might sigh through the tirades of Atalide in *Bajazet* or of Aricie in



As Léonora in *Dalila*.

Phèdre melodiously enough, but that is really the extent of her powers, and it is not enough to justify the importance attached to a very unpromising *début*.

The reader will readily understand that these unjust criticisms by a celebrated writer are given

here merely as evidence of the vanity of theatrical criticism.

In January and February 1873, Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt appeared successively as Junie in *Britannicus*, as Mademoiselle de Belle-Isle, and as Cherubin in *Le Mariage de Figaro*. With the exception of M. Sarcey the newspaper critics paid little attention to her. He thought her one of the best Cherubins he had ever seen: the incarnation of the adventurous youngster, the little scamp who is sure to be never without a sweetheart. She had all the self-consciousness of the big school-boy, with the audacity and impetuosity of a young bantam. She conveyed an impression of desire without love.

Next month her struggles began again with the production of *Dalila* by Edmond About. Her friends seemed inclined to abandon her. M. Sarcey was far from encouraging—

I fear, he said, that the management has made a mistake in already giving Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt leading parts. I do not know whether she will ever be able to fill them, but she certainly cannot do so at present. She is wanting in power and breadth of conception. She impersonates soft and gentle characters admirably, but her failings become manifest when the whole burden of the piece rests on her frail shoulders.

Apparently forgetting that, only a year before, he had declared Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt the only possible successor to Mlle. Favart, M. Sarcey added—

After her two celebrated predecessors, Mlles. Fargueil and Favart, Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt has excited little more than a benevolent curiosity. She can do nothing really badly, for she is an artiste to the tips of her fingers, but her voice has no sarcasm or irony, and is simply hard and distinct. Moreover, her whole personality is stiff. There is no clinging softness about her. She is more harsh than cold, and more cold than catlike.

Auguste Vitu indulged in a little fun over her thinness, and described her as "a needle made to look as neat as a new pin." "There is nothing of the sorceress about her," he added, "except the magic wand—herself."

Paul de Saint-Victor was unmerciful—

It was a singularly unfortunate idea, he wrote, to let Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt appear in this important part of *Léonora*, still alive with the fire breathed into it by Mlle. Fargueil. All the most essential elements in the character—conquering charm, sovereign pride, haughty and cutting wit, light and stinging insolence, pretended pathos and false love—are wanting in her nature. She displays nothing but a subdued plaintiveness, and when she tries to intensify her tone she merely strikes a jarring note. She seeks to be imperious, and is merely violent; her disdain is without hauteur and her allurements are vulgar. It is a singular delusion to suppose that she will be able to fill and sustain a great *rôle*. All the efforts that are made and will be made to push her to the front will only display her inadequacy.

Some envious rivals inspired newspaper attacks on her on the ground of her nationality. She was represented as a German Jewess. "Certainly," she replied, "I am a Jewess, but not a German," and she wrote as follows to M. Jouvin—

I should be really very much obliged if you would include in your next *feuilleton* a few words to correct the mistake you made in your article on the revival of *Dalila* at the Comédie Française. Since that day I have received a perfect avalanche of insulting and threatening letters. Nothing less than this could have induced me to write to you. I am French, absolutely French. I proved it during the siege of Paris, and the Society for the Encouragement of Well-doing awarded me a medal. Would it have done so if I had been a German? All my family come from Holland. Amsterdam was the birthplace of my humble ancestors. If I have a foreign accent—which I much regret—it is cosmopolitan, but not Teutonic. I am a daughter of the great Jewish race, and my somewhat uncultivated language is the outcome of our enforced wanderings. I hope your sense of justice will lead you to rectify a mistake which may not only affect my son's future but is painful to me as a Frenchwoman. I thank you in advance, and am, etc.,

SARAH BERNHARDT.

On the 4th June, 1873, she created Mrs. Douglas in *L'Absent*, by Eugène Manuel, and Marthe in *Chère L'Avocat*, a one-act piece by Paul Ferrier. The parts were insignificant, and brought her no increase of fame. The Press ignored them almost entirely. She took no holiday during the summer of this year. During August she re-appeared in *Andromaque*, and the *Temps* became kind to her again—

Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt was tender, bewitching, coquettish, and above all feminine. Her performance was like an air, sad and passionate by turns, played by a master hand on a violoncello.

A fortnight later, September 17, she was playing Aricie in *Phèdre*. The *Figaro* bestowed a few commonplace compliments on her. She was accused



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt and her son Maurice at the age of fifteen.



of being badly dressed, badly got up, and even with being unmistakably untidy ; but M. Sarcey brought out his most flattering and ecstatic adjectives in her honour.

There can be no doubt about it now. All the opposition excited by Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt's success must yield to facts. She simply delighted the public. The beautiful verses allotted to Aricie were never better delivered. Her voice is genuine music. There was a continuous thrill of pleasure among the entire audience.

In January 1874, *Péril en la demeure*, by Octave Feuillet, was revived. She displayed all her tender poetical grace in the character of the woman on the brink of surrender to temptation : one of Musset's airy creations straying amongst M. Feuillet's *bourgeois* proverbs. In *Le Sphinx*, by the same author, produced on the 23rd March, 1874, she played the rather subordinate rôle of Berthe de Savigny. The notices of this performance show it to have been her first unmistakable success. Hitherto the Paris first-night audiences had merely tolerated her, but on this occasion she accomplished the feat of making a secondary part into an important one. Nevertheless, as one of her critics remarks, she in no way trespassed on her sister actresses' preserves. She played with great discretion, but her graceful movements and the music of her golden voice created a deep impression. The struggle, however, was not yet over. A few connoisseurs admired her greatly, while others regarded her with

positive aversion. Her engagement by M. Perrin required something very like audacity, and the wisdom of the step remained doubtful, the majority of opinions being still unfavourable to her. She excited intense envy among her rivals. There was great dissatisfaction among the other ladies of the company when it was known that M. Perrin intended to pay £100 for a costume she had ordered for *Le Sphinx*. Her next appearance was in a one-act play in verse, *La Belle Paule*, by M. Paul Denayrouse, and in August she reappeared in *Zaïre*. This proved to be the most complete success she had attained since her engagement at the Comédie Française. It was far greater than that of any other member of the cast, as M. Vitu and M. Sarcey recognized. Paul de Saint-Victor alone persisted in depreciating her. According to him she was monotonous, weak, lackadaisical, and hardly noticeable!

On December 22 she played Phèdre for the first time. The risk was great, the part being one of the most exhausting in the whole *répertoire* of the theatre. During the first act she was intensely and perceptibly nervous. Her teeth were set, and her enunciation was hard and abrupt. Her tone was cold and slightly raucous. But in the second act she began to gain confidence, and after her declaration to Hippolyte success began and lasted to the end. She delivered the final lines with consummate art, and, in spite of her delicate physique,



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt as Cleopatra.



she was excellent in the stormy scene with Hippolyte. In the fourth act she was completely carried away by her part. At one point she tripped, and, probably for the first time in her life, mangled a line—she, the incarnation of poetry! Instead of saying, “Reconnais sa vengeance aux fureurs de ta fille,” she exclaimed: “Reconnais sa fureur aux vengeances de ta fille.” The public, however, paid no attention to the slip, nor perhaps did the actress herself. At any rate, she finished in triumph. M. Sarcey considered her superior to Rachel; and M. Jouvin, writing in the *Presse*, declared that Clairon, who has bequeathed us a summary of her views on the part, could not have failed to applaud Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt.

The first performance of *La Fille de Roland*, by Henri de Bornier, took place on February 15, 1875, Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt appearing as Berthe, with Maubant and Mounet-Sully in other parts. On this occasion again critical opinion was divided. Paul de Saint-Victor, in the *Moniteur Universel*, described her as merely an agreeable reciter of verses, without any of the varied and living qualities of the real tragedienne.

Her delivery is still the same musical jeremiad as before. All her tirades are given with the same plaintive, sing-song intonation. When the action quickens the sound rises to a higher key, but the melody remains unaltered. This constant recitative gives way in the strong passages to breathless cries, painful to hear. Her outbursts are those of a breaking voice. They positively wound the ear.

According to Auguste Vitu, in the *Figaro*, her interpretation was fair, and no more. M. Sarcey, however, observed that it was only justice to admit



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt in *La Fille de Roland*.

that she had made something out of nothing. In the afternoon preceding the *première*, she had been elected a full member, or *sociétaire*, of the com-

pany, together with her comrade Laroche. Her antagonists had laid down their arms! In the evening the astonished critics beheld all the lady members of the company vigorously applauding the new *sociétaire*!

On April 27, 1875 came the revival of Emile Augier's *Gabrielle*, in which Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt appeared with Coquelin. She was reproached with making the character allotted to her into an ideal, poetic, and romantic woman, quite in opposition to the author's conception. She re-studied the part, and in December of the same year she created quite another Gabrielle. M. Sarcey, who went to see her, was astonished to observe that she had effected a complete transformation.

When the Salon opened, Sarah Bernhardt gave her rivals another unpleasant surprise by exhibiting busts of Emile de Girardin and Busnach. Her new departure excited a great sensation. It was impossible to set a foot behind the scenes of any Paris theatre without being assailed by such questions as—

“Have you seen the busts? What do you think of them? Are they really very good?”

Portraits of Mlle. Bernhardt were exhibited at the Salon by Clairin and Louise Abbéma. The latter painted her sitter in a black cashmere bodice with an iron-grey skirt, black *guipure* chemisette, black hat and black feathers—the costume worn by her as Mrs. Clarkson in *L'Etrangère*. M. Clairin's Sarah Bernhardt was in a white cashmere *peignoir*,

trimmed with white feathers, and with lace ruffles at the sleeves and neck ; black satin slippers, sky-blue stockings, and a large feather screen : the actress lying on a cerise velvet divan, with a many-coloured cushion under her head.

Sarah Bernhardt was now a full-blown Parisian celebrity, and her fame was destined to go on increasing. Curiosity began to be felt concerning even the most insignificant details of her daily life. This public curiosity stimulated her, as an independent and original person, to brave the gossip of the city and its *bourgeois* hypocrisy. All sorts of more or less true tales of her eccentricities were told about this time. She was constantly haunted by ideas of death, her frail organization being, no doubt, still incomplete. From time to time she fainted on the stage, and her unruly imagination promptly led her to expect the most direful consequences, but her extraordinary elasticity of temperament soon supplied her with renewed strength and vitality, and the complete prostration of to-day was always followed on the morrow by the most sanguine anticipations. One day she caused herself to be measured for a coffin, and had it brought to her house. This coffin, which she courageously keeps at the foot of the bed, is made of pear-wood. The only ornament consists of the artiste's initials S. B., with the motto *Quand-même!* The inside is lined with white satin, and is provided with a mattress, bolster, and cushions—a bed fit for the most



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt in her coffin.

charming of coquettes. But for the spectacle of the lid, always ready to be screwed down, any one would readily lie on this pleasant, perfumed couch. Unfortunately, the lid is a stern reality. There is something else to note. Inspired by a strange but poetical fancy, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt has lined the bottom of the coffin with her most cherished souvenirs. Love-letters and faded bouquets are there, huddled together pell-mell, awaiting her coming—waiting to remind her, in the silence of the tomb, of the sad or happy hours in which she knew them.

The *première* of *L'Etrangère* (May 25, 1876) was exclusively a personal success for her. The newspapers spoke severely of M. Dumas' work—

If Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt, said M. Sarcey, had not thrown the glamour of her gestures and diction over the silly sentimentality of Mrs. Clarkson, the public would have burst out laughing. The piece is simply bad melodrama of the Ambigu type.

Her health was still far from robust, and during a performance of *L'Etrangère* (May 25, 1876) a painful incident occurred. Before the curtain rose M. Got had asked the indulgence of the public for Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt, who was indisposed. The request was far from unnecessary, for as soon as the young artiste appeared on the stage it was evident that she was in great pain. The performance followed its course, but in the middle of her long tirade in the third act, Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt suddenly turned pale, threw up her arms, and fell to the floor.

Indescribable excitement arose amongst the audience. The curtain was promptly lowered, and the most alarming rumours were in circulation, when M. Got came forward and made a reassuring speech, adding, however, that Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt was far too ill to permit of her reappearing. Mlle. Lloyd, who had been immediately informed, took the vacant place, and the performance proceeded, but the anxiety among actors and public was so great that when the curtain fell general depression prevailed. Inquiries were made at midnight, and it was ascertained that the patient was a little better, but that absolute rest was necessary, and that the doctor had forbidden her even to speak.

Her illness led to a rumour that she was about to retire into a convent. Paragraphs, of which the following is a specimen, began to appear in the newspapers—

It is said that an artiste of the Comédie Française was recently driven by private sorrows to take refuge in the sweets of monastic solitude. It appears, however, that after two days' retirement the comedienne in question came to the conclusion that she was not yet ripe for the cloister. She bade farewell to the bare walls of the convent and returned to the theatre, much to the disgust of her fellow-actresses, who realized only too well that she was steadily growing not only into a star but into a planet. You see, M. Sarcey, people can't do without you !!! (*Figaro*, July 9, 1876).

None the less Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt continued to work. On September 27, *Rome Vaincue*, by M. Parodi, was brought out, and this time she obtained



As Doña Sol in *Hernani*.

a brilliant and unmistakable success. Not a single discordant note was heard in the chorus of praise. M. Auguste Vitu wrote—

Draped like an antique statue, her head crowned with long white curls under her matron's veil, Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt made Posthumia one of her finest creations. No other living actress could have rendered this character with so much nobility, grandeur, and true feeling. The genuine tears shed by her audience must have shown her how deeply she had touched their hearts and minds.

M. Sarcey was quite poetical—

When Parodi came to chat with me about the rehearsals then going on, he said—"I never imagined how much there was in the part until I heard Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt play it. She puts into it all the life it has. I cannot recognize my own verses when they fall from her lips." I have indeed rarely seen anything so perfectly fine, especially as regards the last act. She was no longer a comedienne, but human nature itself, interpreted by a marvellous intelligence, a soul full of fire, and the most harmonious and melodious voice that ever delighted human ears. She acts with her whole heart and soul. She is a marvellous, incomparable artiste, one of the *élite*, or, in a word, a genius.

She appeared in *Hernani* on November 21, 1877, with considerable success. She was now unmistakably the spoilt child of the public. She had vanquished almost all her adversaries, and practically every theatre-goer was an admirer of her talent. She realized this and profited by it. Nevertheless she had her moments of humility and self-effacement. She wrote as follows to her manager on New Year's Day, 1878—

My dear Monsieur Perrin, I have begun the year badly. I caught cold this morning when coming back from the cemetery, and I am far from well. I should have liked to tell you this evening of all the grateful affection I feel for you. If you could only understand how entirely I am yours! But all that is difficult for me to express. I owe everything to you. The good points I have, you brought out. I tried to become a little somebody, and you determined that it should be so. Blessings on that deter-



As Doña Sol in *Hernani*.

mination of yours, and my loving greetings to you! My illness depresses me, and I have little hope of completing the year just begun. Monsieur Perrin, I love you very much.

SARAH BERNHARDT.

Her celebrity was unmistakably shown by the wild stories which began to be told about her. She was said to have thrown a live kitten on to a fire; to

have poisoned with her own fair hands two monkeys which had ceased to please her ; to have cut off a dog's head with a view to solving the question whether life continues after decapitation ; the skeleton in her bedroom was all that remained of one of her victims, etc. As a matter of fact, she was then keeping two Russian greyhounds, a poodle, a bulldog, a terrier, a leveret, a parrot, three cats, and several birds. Afterwards she kept lions ! Could a woman who was so fond of animals torture them as she was said to have done ?

At Bressant's benefit performance, February 27, 1878, she played two acts from Jean Aicard's *Othello* with M. Mounet-Sully, who failed completely. M. Sarcey says—

As for Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt, she simply rescued the piece. Her attitude in the death-agony, her head and arms hanging over the side of the bed, was so fine, graceful, and tragic, that enthusiastic applause came from every part of the house.

M. Auguste Vitu summed up his opinion as follows—

Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt was very fine as Desdemona. It is one of her best creations. I say nothing of M. Mounet-Sully, whose efforts were not a success.

On April 2 she appeared for the first time as Alcène in *Amphitryon*. No notice was taken of this in the newspapers. She again played in *Zaire* (May 30), and *Le Sphinx* (October 28), with continued success. In the meantime she made several

ascents in Giffard's captive balloon at the Exhibition, to the great scandal of the Boulevards. An article published by Albert Millaud in the *Figaro* gives a very good idea of the spirit of gossip then prevailing. Sarah Bernhardt replied to his article in the following letter—

Your kind references to the artiste induce me to write in defence of the woman. Those who persist in dinning me into the ears of the public are clever enemies of mine. It is excessively annoying not to be able to do anything without being accused of eccentricity. I love balloon ascents, but now I dare not indulge in them. I have never skinned dogs or burnt cats alive. My hair is not dyed, and my face has a sufficiently corpse-like pallor to absolve me from the suspicion of painting. I am told that my thinness is eccentric, but what am I to do? I should much prefer to be one of those happy people who are neither too fat nor too thin. My illnesses are said to attract too much attention; but they come without warning and strike me down wherever I may happen to be, and if people are there, so much the worse. I am reproached with trying to do everything: acting, sculpture, and painting; but these things amuse me, and bring me money to spend as best pleases me. Such are my crimes. You have taken my part, perhaps without intending to do so, but none the less I thank you heartily. As you applauded the artiste, I did not like to think that the woman might seem so unpleasant a contrast; and then it is such a pleasure to complain! Thanks for your kindness, Monsieur Millaud.

SARAH BERNHARDT.

Some little time afterwards she published an account of her ballooning experiences in an amusing little book entitled, *In the Clouds; Impressions of a Chair*, with some very pretty illustrations by Clairin. The simple and unstudied gaiety of this book



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt in her travelling costume.



brought it into great favour. Of course she was accused of another attempt to advertise herself, and her literary efforts were riddled with epigrams, but she was beginning to be accustomed to this kind of thing. Several newspapers asked her to write for them. The *Globe* requested her to supply the 1879 Salon critique, and another journal suggested that she should write an article on England, in which country she was about to perform. "How in the world," exclaimed Albert Millaud, with mingled astonishment and alarm, "can such a frail creature, made up of poetry and grace, accomplish such labours?"

On February 7, 1879, she played Monime in *Mithridate* for the first time. The whole success of the performance fell to her. "If ever a part suited Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt," said M. Sarcey, "Monime is that part." "Had it been written expressly for her, it could not have fitted her better," exclaimed M. Auguste Vitu. Even the unappeasable Paul de Saint-Victor had to give way.

The *rôle*, he wrote, is within the scope of her talents, and is exactly adapted to her voice. She has all the required uniformity of tone and touching sweetness, relieved by one or two outbursts of offended dignity and quietly ironical smiles. She obtained well-merited applause.

Ruy Blas was reproduced on April 4. According to M. Claretie it would be impossible to have a more exquisite impersonation of any poetical creation, or a better rendering of all the emotions

of the character. Emile Zola, who was then theatrical critic on the *Voltaire*, wrote—" *Ruy Blas* was played to perfection at the Comédie Française. Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt is exquisite." M. Auguste Vitu gave his opinion in these terms—

Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt did not play the Queen better last night than she did at the Odéon in 1872, for the simple reason that she was then perfection itself. Yesterday's applause and calls before the curtain must have convinced her that she was quite as charming as she was six years ago.

The *Figaro* descriptive writer tells us—

Everybody was attacked by stage fright, and Sarah was far from being any better than her *confrères*. In the second act, she trembled to such an extent that when she tried to take her attendant Casilda by the chin she could only indicate the act by a gesture. "For goodness' sake," whispered Mlle. Baretta, "don't tremble like that; you'll frighten me horribly." Back in her dressing-room, Sarah began to weep copiously, but this time with joy. Victor Hugo remained only a short time in the front of the house. Between the first and second acts he paid a visit to Sarah before her turn came. Before the fifth act Sarah came to the poet for a little of the encouragement he knows so well how to administer, and which always gives her so much ardour and confidence.

Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt had now been nearly seven years at the Comédie Française, and those who knew her were beginning to feel surprise at the length of her stay. The same year, 1879, was to witness several events leading up to her final flight in search of independence and freedom of movement. Mr. Mayer engaged the Comédie Française troupe for a series of performances to



As Léonora in *Dalila*.



be given at the Gaiety Theatre, London, in June. Sarah was to play in *L'Etrangère*, *Phèdre*, *Le Sphinx*, *Hernani*, *Andromaque*, and *Zaïre*. The company left for London on June 1. Next day *Phèdre* was played, and *L'Etrangère* on the 3rd. Sarah was somewhat coldly received at first, but British iciness soon melted beneath the tragedienne's fire. On the 9th, M. Sarcey felt justified in writing — "The English can adore two idols at the same time, and they are now devoted to Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt."

On the first evening she insisted on playing the second act of *Phèdre* as an interlude. Just as her turn was coming, she was seized by one of those "blue funks" by which actors are sometimes liable to be paralyzed. She fell down in a state of collapse; her hands and feet became icy cold, and she had to be rubbed vigorously for ten minutes to put a little life into her. She was half carried on to the stage. As was only to be expected, she attacked her words badly, went on worse, and failed completely. The audience, however, noticed nothing, and applauded her frantically. She was "called," and was enthusiastically cheered as she stood leaning on the arm of M. Mounet-Sully, without whose support she must have fallen, half dead as she was.

But now things began to go wrong. *L'Etrangère* had been announced for a Saturday *matinée*, and *Hernani* for the evening. Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt was in both pieces, but her parts were not very tiring

ones. Like Doña Sol, Mrs. Clarkson has only one act calling for real exertion. Moreover, Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt had not played at all since her appearance in *Zaire*, and she had had time to rest. As a matter of fact—and this was the principal grievance of the Comédie against her—she did not rest. She had, for instance, performed *Le Passant* and the second act of *Phèdre* on the Friday night at a private house, before an aristocratic audience. When the time came for her to go to the theatre, she sent her maid to say that she was tired and could not perform. The effect may easily be imagined. Every seat was taken, the Saturday performances being always the best attended. It was feared that the public would take the announcement, which would have to be made, as a gross breach of politeness. How was it possible to organize another performance at such short notice? If only she had let them know in the morning! There was, however, no escape. Coquelin, whose turn it was to make the announcements for the week, went before the curtain. In a few well-chosen words he explained what had occurred, asked the audience to excuse the Comédie Française, and wound up by announcing that there would be no performance. A great commotion followed, and several hisses were heard—a very rare occurrence in a good English theatre. Chance brought an addition to the strength of the company in the shape of an actor who happened to call at



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt in 1877.



the theatre for his letters. Some one pointed out that it would now be possible to play *Tartuffe*, and Coquelin was called upon to make another proclamation. But Coquelin was too disconcerted to do anything of the kind. "I should be a perfect weathercock," he exclaimed. "I really can't go on and say the exact opposite of what I said five minutes before. Let Got go!" Got was the *doyen* and sage of the company, the last resource in desperate emergencies. He went forward and delivered a little speech to the effect that *Tartuffe* would be performed for those who liked to remain, and that their money would be returned. As for those who desired to see *L'Etrangère*, their tickets would be available for a special *matinée*, which would be given on the Wednesday following.

Here was a pretty kettle of fish! M. Sarcey, who had, as usual, accompanied the Comédie Française troupe, observed—

Another affair of this kind would be more than enough to make the Comédie Française unpopular in England. Those persons who, through caprice or a desire to show off, or, to put it differently, through a mistaken estimate of their own physical powers, place their *confrères* in such difficulties, are greatly to blame, and they may be sure that a day will come when they will have to atone for such conduct. Spoilt children are amusing until some friend of the family wants to know at what time they are put to bed.

The whole of the French Press rose in wrath. M. Albert Wolff, in the *Figaro*, was particularly aggressive. He raked up all the old grievances

against the actress, and accused her of having gone about in male attire, and having organized an exhibition of her sculpture and paintings in London. Sarah sent him the following reply by telegraph—



Sarah Bernhardt and F. Sarcey. By Caran d'Ache.

London, June 28.

MONSIEUR ALBERT WOLFF, *Figaro* Office.

Do you really believe these insane stories, Monsieur Wolff? Who could have given you such information? In spite of all the infamous slanders that must have been poured into your ear, I still think you a friend with a little kindness for me. I give you my word of honour that I have never worn man's clothes here in London; I did not even bring my suit with me. I absolutely deny the story. I went once, and only once, to the little exhibition I organized, and that was the day on which admission was by



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt as sculptor.

invitation only. Consequently it is false to say that a single shilling was paid on purpose for any one to see me. It is true that I give private performances, but you are aware that I am one of the worst paid *sociétaires* of the Comédie Française, and I am entitled to make up the difference. That I am exhibiting sixteen pictures and eight pieces of sculpture is perfectly true, but as I brought them here to sell them I must let them be seen. With regard to the respect due to the House of Molière, my dear M. Wolff, I maintain that I uphold it better than anybody, because I am incapable of inventing such slanders on one of its standard-bearers. If the silly stories told about me have wearied the Parisians and decided them, as you lead me to fear, to give me a bad reception, I will not expose any one to the possibility of having to commit an act of cowardice, and I will hand in my resignation. If the London public is incensed against me by the rumours in circulation, and has decided to change its kindness into hostility, I hope the Comédie will allow me to leave England at once, so that the company may not experience the pain of seeing one of their number hooted and hissed. I send you this letter by telegraph—a piece of extravagance justified by the importance I attach to public opinion. I beg you, my dear Monsieur Wolff, to accord my letter at least as much consideration as you have given to the calumnies circulated by my enemies.

With a friendly hand-shake, I am, etc.,

SARAH BERNHARDT.

She then handed her formal resignation to Got, the *doyen* of the Comédie Française. Her colleagues, who fully understood how greatly she contributed to the success of the company, insisted on her withdrawing her resignation, made her a *sociétaire* with a full share in the profits, promised her two months' holiday every year, and, in short, concealed the iron hand of interest under the velvet glove of amiability. Emile Zola took up his vigorous pen and treated

M. Albert Wolff's hypocritical arguments with scant ceremony—

One of the principal grievances against her is that she has not confined herself to dramatic art, but has also taken up sculpture, painting, and what not. This is too absurd! Not content with calling her thin and treating her as a lunatic, people want to decide how she is to use her spare time! She might as well be in prison. As a matter of fact she is not actually denied the right to practise painting and sculpture, but she is calmly told that she must not exhibit her works. This pretension is simply unmitigated rubbish. We had better pass a law at once to forbid the plurality of talents. And Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt's style is considered to have so much individuality that she has been accused of passing off other people's work as her own!

M. Sarcey indulged in a species of funeral oration—

Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt has given in her resignation. The Comédie will lose a charming actress in her, and will have to temporarily abandon certain pieces which it will be almost impossible to perform without her. These pieces, however, are not many. Mlle. Bernhardt is a heavenly lyre, but she has only two or three strings. I regret that we must do without her, but, as we know, no one is indispensable. Actors come and go and their places are soon filled up, however exceptional their talents may be. No actress, however great, can walk off with the House of Molière sticking to the soles of her boots. It will be interesting to see how Mlle. Bernhardt will succeed when she follows an *impresario* and tries her powers on uneducated audiences ignorant of our language. But, after all, these melancholy reflections are perhaps uncalled for. The matter may still be put right. Who knows?

The matter was, in fact, put right, but only temporarily. The Théâtre Français re-opened its doors on August 2nd, with *Les Femmes Savantes* and *Le Malade Imaginaire*. At midnight the cur-



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt as painter.

tain rose for the well-known ceremony carried out on such occasions. All the artists of the Comédie came forward, two by two, according to the time-honoured custom, bowed to the public, and took



Caricature by André Gill.

their seats. Loud, continued, and hearty applause burst forth from every part of the house when Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt came slowly forward to the footlights. It was her formal reconciliation with the

Paris public. "We are all delighted about it," said M. Sarcey, "and we hope the 'row' will be a lesson to all concerned."

All's well that ends well; but unfortunately in this case the end had not been reached. The year 1880 witnessed a great event in Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt's



Sketch by Mme. Sarah Bernhardt.

life: the severance of her connection with the Comédie Française. On April 17th, *L'Aventurière*, by Emile Augier, was revived, Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt taking the difficult part of Clorinde. The newspapers gave her full credit for her usual ability and charm, but qualified their praise to an

unmistakable extent. M. Sarcey wrote in the *Temps*—

Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt's costume hardly struck me as suitable. She came on the stage with a head-dress exactly like a nightcap. Her comprehension of the part was still more unsatisfactory. It is difficult to understand what she intended to make of the character. Her Clorinde was absolutely colourless.

In the *Moniteur Universel*, Paul de Saint-Victor devoted several columns of scathing and even savage criticism to an attack on Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt. Knowing her hold on the public, she might have ignored this hostility, but her cup of bitterness was filled to overflowing by M. Auguste Vitu, who, though a courteous and moderate critic, wrote as follows in the *Figaro*—

During the last two acts, the new Clorinde indulged in uncalled-for exaggerations. She not merely forced a voice which is pleasing only when used in moderation, but she managed her body and arms in a style which would do very well for Virginie in *L'Assommoir*, but is out of place at the Comédie Française.

This was more than Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt could bear. She sat down and wrote the following letter to M. Perrin—

MONSIEUR L'ADMINISTRATEUR,

You made me play before I was ready. You gave me only eight stage rehearsals, and there were only three full rehearsals of the piece. I could not make up my mind to appear under such conditions, but you insisted upon it. What I foresaw has come to pass, and the result of the performance has even gone beyond what I expected. One critic actually charges me with playing Virginie in *L'Assommoir* instead of Doña Clarinde in *L'Aventurière!*

I appeal to Zola and Emile Augier. This is my first failure at the Comédie Française, and it shall be my last. I warned you at the dress rehearsal, but you took no notice. I now keep my word. When you receive this letter I shall have left Paris. Be good enough, Monsieur l'Administrateur, to accept my resignation as from this moment, and to believe me, etc.,

SARAH BERNHARDT.

April 18, 1880.

Immediately after writing this letter Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt took the train to Havre, and ran to earth at Sainte-Adresse. A terrible uproar followed. The entire Press, the Comédie, the author of the unlucky play, and the public assailed the fugitive with showers of violent invective and cutting sarcasm. The *sociétaires* of the Comédie were hastily summoned to a meeting, and they decided to take legal proceedings with a view to obtaining—

(1) The exclusion of Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt from all rights as a *sociétaire* of the Comédie Française.

(2) The confiscation of her proportion of the reserve fund, amounting to over forty thousand francs.

(3) Three hundred thousand francs damages.

The critics were unanimously against her. Paul de Saint-Victor opened all the flood-gates of his controversial invective. M. Sarcey indulged in prophecy, and delivered himself of the following oracular saying—"She had better not try to deceive herself. *Her success will not be lasting. She is not one of those artistes who can bear the whole weight of a piece on their own shoulders, and who require no assistance to hold the public attention.*"

M. Emile Augier, who had expected great things from the revival of his play, was much annoyed by the defection of the principal exponent. He wrote M. Perrin a letter in which he attempted to conceal his irritation under the mask of irony—

She was as well prepared as she could be. I go further, and say she played quite as well as usual, with all her defects and all her good qualities, with which art has nothing to do. Moreover, she obtained as much applause as ever from an adoring public. What, then, was the cause of the trouble? The Press indulged in some uncomplimentary remarks, and Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt does not like this kind of thing. With whom does the fault lie? Evidently with messieurs the critics, who have hitherto treated her as a spoilt child. Are these ungrateful Athenians beginning to tire of her success, and to think it unjustified?

M. Emile Zola, whose devotion to the cause of generosity and courage does not date from yesterday, was almost the only journalist to take Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt's part, or rather to point out the faults on both sides, and to make the voice of wisdom heard amid this outburst of passion. He reminded Sarah that "it is sometimes an honour to be attacked." Whilst Emile Zola, and also Emile de Girardin, lifted up their voices for peace and reconciliation, Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt in her retirement at Sainte-Adresse enthusiastically proclaimed her joy at what she called her deliverance. "Do you know how much I earned?" she asked a representative of the *Gaulois*. "Barely thirty thousand francs a year. That may be all very well for people

who intend to remain on the stage until they are fifty or sixty years old, but in twenty years' time shall I still be in this world? I have always had a horror of growing old on the stage, and I don't mean to do it." Her feeling was in fact so strong on this point that she incontinently adopted an heroic resolution—to leave the stage! It had already caused her too much suffering, she said, and she was quite decided not to die on it. She thus announced the result of her cogitations to the representative of the *Gaulois*—

"Yes, it's all settled. I have learnt painting and sculpture, and I intend to live by that. My sales bring me in thirty thousand francs a year. My brush and chisel will make me a second existence, much calmer and more profitable than the first."

Observing her guest's astonishment, she added, gravely, "with a sad smile which rendered doubt impossible"—

"I came to this decision when I made up my mind to leave the Comédie Française."

Gradually the storm subsided, and the affair began to be forgotten. The only allusions made to it were when some other artiste took up one of Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt's parts. The *Figaro*, for instance, amiably remarked—

M. Emile Augier last night assured Mlle. Croizette, who was playing Sarah Bernhardt's rôle in *L'Aventurière*, that this was the first time he had known any artiste form an intelligent conception of the character of Clorinde.



As Adrienne Lecouvreur.

According to M. Sarcey—

* Mlle. Bartet has begun to appear as the Queen in *Ruy Blas*, the part formerly taken by Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt. Mlle. Bartet is meeting with considerable success.

It was a very neat way of saying to the fugitive—

“You see, after all, you are not indispensable.”

Here is another specimen of the kind remarks which the newspapers took a keen joy in circulating. It was reported that Sarah had said, “I shall never forgive Victor Hugo for letting Mlle. Bartet play the Queen in *Ruy Blas*,” to which the poet had retorted that Mlle. Bartet played the part so well that her name deserved to be indissolubly connected with it in future.

Exactly a month after her sensational resignation, Sarah Bernhardt went to London, not, as might have been supposed, to sell some of her works of art, but to give a series of performances with Milles. Lalb and Jeanne Bernhardt, and MM. Dieudonné and Berton. She met with considerable success, especially in *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, *Froufrou*, and *Rome Vaincue*. While she was tasting the joys of this apotheosis, she was by no means forgotten in the city she had abandoned. On the 18th June, the First Chamber of the Civil Tribunal resounded for three mortal hours with her name, and in spite of all the skill of her counsel, Maître Barboux, the Court ordered her to pay the Comédie Française 100,000 francs damages, and to forfeit

all right to her share (about 44,000 francs) of the reserve fund. Her flight thus turned out to be an expensive affair. There was nothing for it but to pay, and this was the beginning of the peregrinations destined to spread Sarah's fame beyond the seas. In August we find her travelling through Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. One of those numerous incidents which have caused incorrigible patriotism to be numbered among Sarah's virtues, occurred at Copenhagen. In the course of a *fête* given in her honour, the German Minister, Baron Magnus, proposed the health of *la belle France*. Sarah Bernhardt immediately interposed with—

"I beg your pardon, Baron, but you mean the whole of France, don't you?"

The German Minister found himself in so awkward a predicament that he promptly left the room, and it was supposed that he had discovered an allusion to Alsace-Lorraine in Sarah's remark.

She returned to Paris, but left again almost immediately. On the 10th September she was at Nantes, and afterwards she appeared at Bordeaux, Toulouse, Lyons, and Geneva. She excited wild enthusiasm everywhere. Medals bearing her image and superscription, Sarah Bernhardt bracelets and collars, photographs and biographies were sold in the streets. At Lyons, the Khedive's son unsuccessfully offered £80 for a stage-box. The Old World soon ceased to afford sufficient scope for her activity. On the 16th October, 1880, she realized a long-

cherished desire, and sailed from Havre to America on a tour, under Mr. Abbey's management. She took with her all her company, her servants, and



As Adrienne Lecouvreur.

twenty-eight trunks containing innumerable dresses and particularly one which she was to wear in *La Dame aux Camélias*. This wonderful toilette had cost £480, and fifty work-girls, so the story ran,

had toiled for a whole month to embroider the camellias on the mantle. Mr. Abbey had promised the actress a small fortune : £100 for every performance, plus half the receipts above £480. Sarah extended her journey to nearly every part of the States. From the date of her *début* at New York, on 10th November, she was incessantly on the move. She appeared at Boston, Hartford, Montreal, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati, etc. Her *répertoire* included *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, *Froufrou*, *Hernani*, *Phèdre*, *Le Passant*, and *La Dame aux Camélias*. She became the proprietor of a tame alligator, who soon succumbed to the champagne diet she inflicted on him. At length, on the 16th May, 1881, she landed in triumph at Havre, and was greeted by a cohort of friends from Paris, and by a crowd estimated, somewhat rashly perhaps, by the *Figaro*, at 50,000 persons. She had earned £36,800 in one hundred and sixty-six performances. Out of this sum she handed £4000 over to her agent, Jarrett, and £16,000 to her legal representatives in Paris. Her travelling expenses amounted to about £8000, so that after paying all her debts she was left with a balance of £8800. She brought back from America not only this respectable sum, but something else : the remembrance of great ovations, unprecedented triumphs, and adventures in which she invariably preserved her dignity. One day she happened to enter a Protestant church and heard the minister denounce her



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt in travelling costume, during her first American tour.,'

as an "imp of darkness, a female demon sent from the modern Babylon to corrupt the New World." Before the day was over, the clergyman received this note—

MY DEAR CONFRÈRE,

Why attack me so violently? Actors ought not to be hard on one another.

SARAH BERNHARDT.

On her return to France, she treated her compatriots to such a surprise as only a *grand seigneur* could have conceived. She was urged by a charitable association at Havre to give a performance in aid of the funds, and two days after landing she performed *La Dame aux Camélias*—the same play which had been applauded all over the world for a year before under the name of *Camille*, but which she had never yet performed in France. When she appeared as Marguerite Gauthier, on the 18th of May, 1881, before the Havre public and many of her Paris friends, including Halanzier, Lapommeraye, Clairin, Busnach, Abbéma, and many others, her reception was a perfect triumph. And yet Dumas had said of the part, "It is not made for her!"

After her long journey it might have been supposed that she would rest on her laurels for a time, but she did nothing of the kind. In June she was in London, and arrangements were soon in progress for a long European tour, to commence in October. Before that date she accomplished another French tour under the management of M. Félix Duquesnel,

who undertook to give her £2800 for thirty-five performances of *Hernani* and *La Dame aux Camélias*, between August 27th and October 4th, with Paul Mounet as *Hernani* and Angelo as *Armand Duval*. M. Duquesnel was the same manager who, years before, paid her six pounds per month out of his own pocket at the Odéon. He was now getting his money back, with interest. Her French tour completed, she started again, almost without waiting to take breath, on her great European expedition, under the management of Mr. Jarrett, who had accompanied her to America. She visited Russia, Spain, Austria, Holland, Belgium, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway: the whole of Europe, in fact, except Germany, that country being expressly omitted from the contract. She opened her tour at the Mint Theatre, Brussels, the King of the Belgians making a hasty return to the capital from his country seat in the Ardennes to see her. At Vienna she organized an exhibition of her works of art. She next entered Russia, and reached Moscow on the 10th December. The last sentence of the following telegram published in the newspapers gives a fair idea of the sensation she excited—

Moscow, December 10.—Sarah Bernhardt is extremely hoarse and cannot perform this evening. General consternation prevails.

Her success, however, was not unmixed. She was known to be of Jewish origin, and the Russian fanatics did not omit to remind her of it. At Odessa



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt and her friends at Sainte-Adresse.

she was pelted with stones, and at Kieff she was insulted. But these things were mere trifles. At St. Petersburg her coming created as much excitement as if it had been an event of national importance. The prices charged for the series of twelve performances are significant.

	<i>Koubles</i>	£	s.	d.
Pit boxes	120	=	13	0 0
Dress circle boxes (front seats) . .	150	=	16	5 0
„ „ (centre box)	180	=	19	10 0
„ „ front row	72	=	7	15 0
„ „ 2nd and 3rd rows	60	=	6	10 0
Upper boxes (front)	150	=	16	5 0

Her success was prodigious. Not content with raining flowers on the stage, ladies in the audience jumped over the partition separating them from the pit, so that they could approach the great artiste as closely as possible. She would have received many costly presents had she not made it known that she would accept nothing but flowers. At length she tore herself away from her enthusiastic admirers, to whom she had appeared in *La Princesse Georges*, *Rome Vaincue*, *Hernani*, *Jean Marie*, and *La Dame aux Camélias*. From St. Petersburg she went to Warsaw, and thence to Genoa, where she was seized with one of those sudden attacks which had recurred rather too frequently for some time past. In the middle of the second act of *La Dame aux Camélias* she collapsed into a chair with blood pouring from her mouth. The performance was stopped, but on

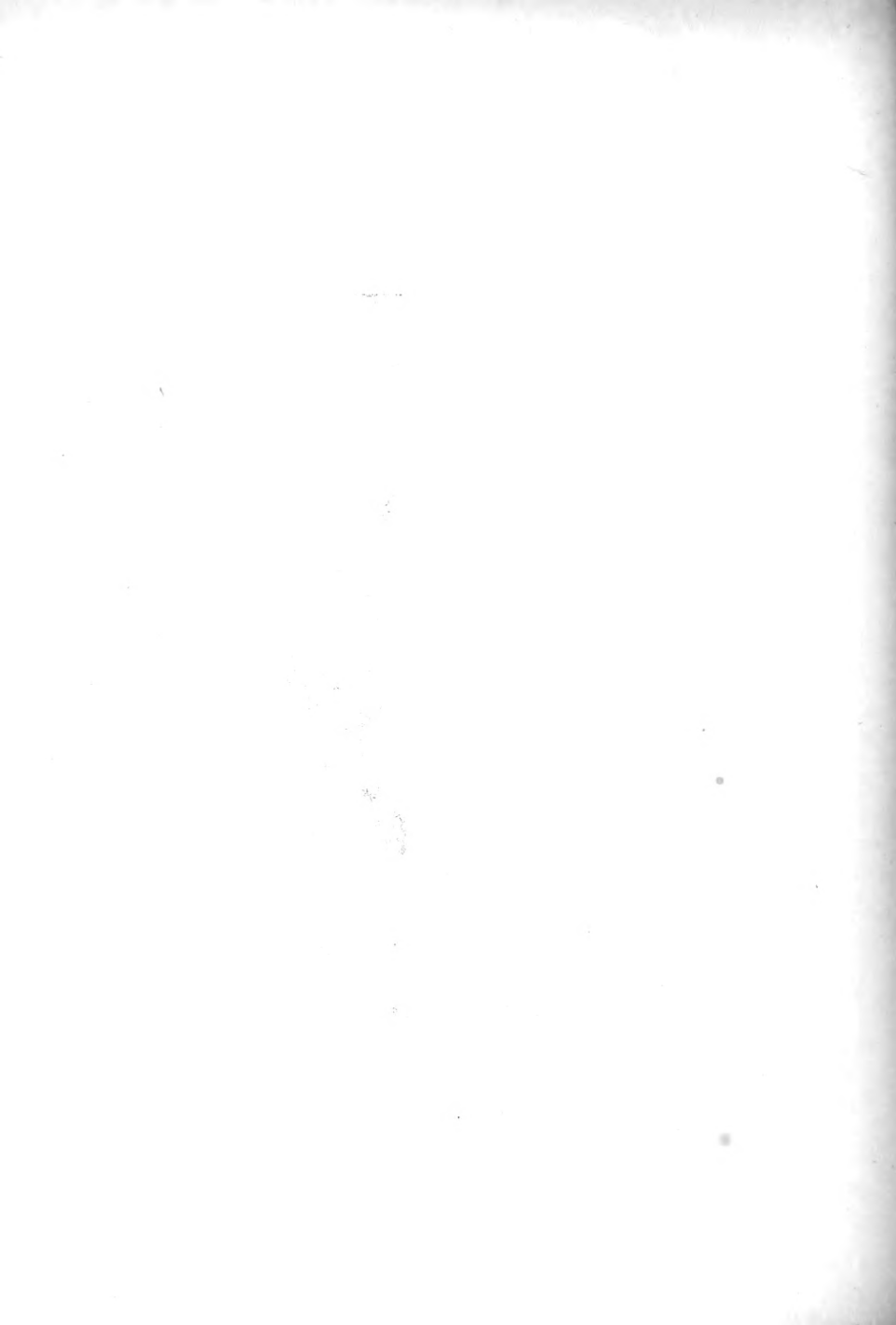
the following day the indefatigable woman was *en route* again. After playing at Bâle and Lausanne, she gave a series of six performances, beginning on the 16th of February at Lyons, where she appeared in *Les Faux Ménages*, by Pailleron. Then she returned to Italy, receiving £240 for each appearance, and meeting with enthusiastic applause everywhere. She left Italy, and suddenly Paris was struck dumb by the following extraordinary and totally unexpected announcement, published by the newspapers on the 8th April—

London.—At eight o'clock this (Tuesday) morning, April 4th, at the Greek Consulate, Sarah Bernhardt was married to her fellow-actor *Daria*, who recently took Angelo's place in her troupe. The news may appear improbable, seeing that Sarah was at Naples last Friday, and even performed that evening ; but it is none the less a fact that she left Naples on the following morning, ostensibly for Nice, took the train on to Paris, and thence to Boulogne, crossed to Folkestone, and finally reached London, accompanied by M. Damala.

Marriage was, in fact, the only eccentricity Sarah had not yet perpetrated, but she was now enabled to make up for lost time with the kind assistance of M. Damala, an actor by choice, but formerly an *attaché* in the Greek diplomatic service. The newly-married couple began the first quarter of their honeymoon by immediately taking the train for Marseilles, whence they started by special steamer on April 5th for Spain, to continue the tour. They returned to Marseilles on May 5th, and performed at Grenoble, Geneva, Rouen, and Brussels. On the



As Léa.



26th, a benefit performance was given at Paris for the widow of M. Chéret, and Sarah Bernhardt and her husband played *La Dame aux Camélias* for the first time in the French capital. The performance, a triumphal success, brought in 59,051 francs (£2362).

Her wanderings soon began again. London, Brighton, Blackpool, Manchester, and Scotland saw the wonderful artiste. In the meantime it was announced that she had made arrangements for a four months' tour in America, and that she and her husband were to be paid £40,000 for fifty performances. Then it became known that after so many wanderings Sarah was to return to Paris and appear in a new play, *Fédora*, by M. Sardou, at the Vaudeville. She had been promised £40 a night for a minimum of a hundred performances. The *première*, on December 12, 1882, met with considerable success, but while the performances were proceeding the financial difficulties with which the artiste had long been struggling were revealed to the public. She had spent money very freely, and omitted to balance her income and expenditure. She carried out all sorts of wild schemes, such as that of buying the Ambigu theatre for her son Maurice, then seventeen years of age. The affair turned out a very expensive one, and in February 1883, big placards posted on the walls of Paris announced that Mme. Sarah Bernhardt-Damala's diamonds and jewellery were to be sold by auction

on the 8th, 9th, and 10th, at the Hôtel des Ventes. The announcement created a great sensation, much to the vendor's advantage, the sale producing no less than £7128. Actresses such as Mme. Marie Magnier, Marthe Devoyo, and Julia de Cléry, well-known *demi-mondaines*, collectors, and boulevardiers, competed for the wonders of Sarah's jewel-case. The importance of the sale may be estimated by the following lots, and the prices at which they were knocked down—

Very handsome single necklace thickly set with rose diamonds and enriched with brilliants . . .	£ 960
Bracelet, 573 pearls in nine rows	321
Bracelet	302
Brooch	150

After the withdrawal of *Fédora* from the Vaudeville, Sarah Bernhardt took the play on tour, but it proved only moderately popular in Belgium and Holland. The intrepid Sarah now made up her mind to a brief period of repose, but she was none the less kept before the Paris public. On April 28, 1883, she appeared with Mme. Réjane, M. Saint Germain, M. Daubray, and M. Guyon, at the Trocadéro, in a two-act pantomime by M. Richepin, entitled *Pierrot Assassin*. Early in September the papers published mysterious paragraphs announcing the return of M. Damala to Paris, and the agreement of the pair to separate. The public was not previously aware of M. Damala's absence, or of any disagreement in the

household. The initiated, however, knew that the honeymoon was a short one, that discord had made its appearance only a few months after the sensational marriage in London, and that M. Damala had been obliged to make up his mind to exile—in Tunis, it was said. The separation did not seem to



M. Damala.

be a great affliction to Sarah. At the very beginning of the season she was in arms and eager for the fray. On September 17, 1883, in company with Marais, she revived *Froufrou*, which she had never before performed in Paris. This was at the Porte St. Martin theatre, which had been bought by her under the name of her son, M. Maurice Bernhardt, in partnership with M. Derembourg.

The success of the piece was considerable, though not absolutely complete. Nevertheless *Froufrou* ran for ninety-nine nights. Immediately afterwards (December 20) she brought out *Nana Sahib*, a seven-act drama in verse by M. Jean Richepin. Her own success was very great, though, as usual, it was not unanimously admitted; but the piece itself was a failure, in spite of the fact that the author himself replaced M. Marais a week after the *première*. *Nana Sahib* is connected in theatrical history with another souvenir. The night before its production, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt was the central figure in a terrific scandal. Accompanied by her son Maurice and M. Jean Richepin, she made her way into the rooms occupied by Mme. Marie Colombier, turned all the furniture topsyturvy, smashed the ornaments, and finally set upon the lady of the house and horsewhipped her in a frenzy of rage. The reason for this conduct was not far to seek. Mme. Marie Colombier had just published an abominably offensive book, the title of which, *Sarah Barnum*, showed clearly enough against whom it was directed. The affair created a great uproar, but no one ventured to blame the insulted actress for taking the law into her own hands.

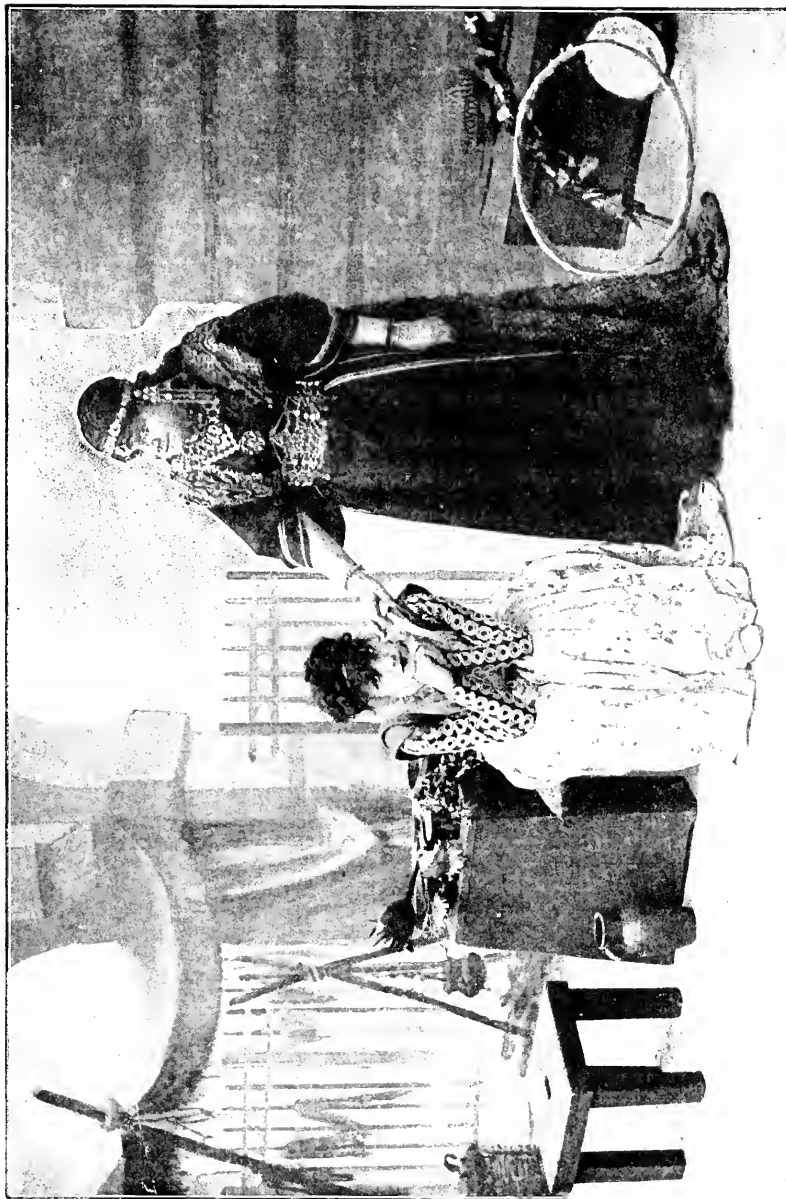
Nana Sahib was withdrawn after thirty performances, and on January 26, 1884, Sarah Bernhardt appeared in *La Dame aux Camélias*, which thus became, as it still is, her chief resource. This



As Théodora.

revival lasted for more than a hundred nights. On May 21 it was replaced by an adaptation of *Macbeth*, by M. Jean Richepin. This ran for only a month. At the end of June Mme. Sarah Bernhardt left for a short foreign tour. Next season, in consequence of sundry stories which found their way into the papers, and particularly of an attempt to poison her, which Paris did not take seriously, she handed over the Porte St. Martin theatre to M. Duquesnel, and joined his company at that theatre. *Macbeth* was tried again on September 11, but was withdrawn five weeks afterwards. On December 26 she played *Théodora*, one of the most undoubted successes of her career. On this point there can be no mistaking the testimony of figures. *Théodora* ran for two hundred consecutive nights, and, when the hundredth performance was given, the piece had already earned nearly a million francs. After Paris had had enough of *Théodora*, the piece was taken to Brussels and London, where it met with renewed success. It was brought back to the Porte St. Martin on the 28th October, 1885, and was given fifty-four times before its chief exponent broke down, and was compelled, on the 21st December, to leave the stage before the performance was over. On the following day she was obliged to take to her bed, but on the 31st she was able to appear in *Marion de Lorme*, though she was still visibly suffering from overwork. On the 27th February she gave another trial to a Shakespearean

adaptation — a somewhat indifferent version of *Hamlet*, by MM. Cressonnois and Samson, in which she played Ophelia. *Hamlet* failed to attract the public any more than *Marion de Lorme*, and on the 5th April Sarah brought out *Fédora* again. After sixteen performances she left on her annual visit to London, and thence to Liverpool, where she took the steamer for Rio de Janeiro. This was the beginning of her great American tour under the management of Messrs. Abbey and Grau. It was one prodigious triumphal progress from one end of America to the other. It lasted thirteen months, and took her through Mexico, Brazil, Chili, the United States, and Canada. The *répertoire*, an extensive one, comprised *Fédora*, *La Dame aux Camélias*, *Froufrou*, *Phèdre*, *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, *Théodora*, *Hernani*, *Le Maître de Forges*, and *Le Sphinx*, M. Philippe Garnier taking the principal male parts. In Brazil the average receipts were £720 a night. "Absurdly rich men," says M. Jules Lemaitre, "wearing black whiskers and covered with jewels, like idols, used to wait outside the stage door, and lay their handkerchiefs on the ground so that dust should not soil the feet of Phèdre or Théodora." After her appearance as Phèdre at Rio de Janeiro she was recalled two hundred times! The twenty-five performances she gave brought in £12,800, of which she received £4000. Three performances at New York realized £5040, and twenty at Buenos Ayres, where the



Scene from *Theodora*.

Mme. Sarah Bernhardt.

Mme. Marie Laurent.

total number of spectators reached 80,000, produced £20,000. The Argentinos' enthusiasm rose to such a pitch that they presented her with an estate of 13,000 acres in the Mission territory, the best part of the Argentine Republic. She was obliged to promise the generous donors that she would take advantage of her first month's leisure to come and taste the sweets of repose amongst her own gazelles and beneath the shade of her own gardenias and diamelas!

In the meantime, gossip, the inevitable companion of the capricious artiste, was not idle. At Rio de Janeiro the Noirmont scandal occurred. Mme. Noirmont, intermittently an actress, but better known in a certain circle of society as "la grande Marthe," was a member of the company. What was the quarrel between the actress and her manageress? History sayeth not, but the fact remains that during a rehearsal one day Mme. Noirmont "went for" Sarah, and gave her a resounding smack, to the accompaniment of much strong language. Sarah promptly hauled Mme. Noirmont off to the nearest police-station, where a summons was duly issued against the offender. But this was not enough for Sarah, and one evening, when the curtain had only just fallen on the second act of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, Sarah seized a horsewhip and paid off all outstanding scores. Result: a second visit to the police-station, and a second scandal. Later on, while the company was at Santiago, another story

got into circulation. In April 1878 the American papers announced the marriage of Mme. Sarah Bernhardt and M. Angelo, a member of her troupe. The New York *Morning Journal* added that the marriage was kept secret because the divorce proceedings against M. Damala were still in progress. The report was promptly denied, and Sarah sent the following telegram to the *Figaro*—

The news of my marriage with Angelo is absurd, because he is married already, and so am I. Please contradict this mischievous story. Thanks in advance.

SARAH BERNHARDT.

After thirteen months' absence Sarah at length returned to Europe. The total receipts during her American tour were a million dollars, of which her own share was £60,000. She landed in England on May 6th, not, as might be supposed, to rest, but to start off again on another tour, under the management of Mr. Mayer, through England, Scotland, and Ireland. On August 10th she started for Cauterets, and begun to prepare for her return to Paris. She reopened with *La Tosca* on November 24, 1887, and long and loud was the applause that greeted her. M. Sarcey alone withheld unstinted praise, and took exception, not to the artiste's talents but to her use of them, and indulged in criticisms of the play itself. M. Sardou responded in a letter addressed to a third person, in which he took advantage of the opportunity to make a hit at the critics of his work—



As Lady Macbeth.



MONSIEUR,

You ask for my opinion on Sarah Bernhardt. It is simply that she is an admirable artiste, and that, in *La Tosca*, she has far exceeded anything that has been done in our generation by Georges, Dorval, or Rachel. As for Sarcey, who knows nothing about painting, music, architecture, or sculpture, and to whom Nature has harshly denied all sense of the artistic, it is not surprising that he should be not merely indifferent but even hostile to any attempt to reproduce the past by means of scenery, costume, and the representation of former customs. He showed this feature by his treatment of *La Haine*, but it would be unjust to blame him for this defect in his intellect. If he likes to play the part of the fox who lost his tail, by all means let him do it.

Cordially yours,

V. SARDOU.

This time M. Sardou was on the right side. *La Tosca* was performed one hundred and twenty-nine times, and was not taken off the boards until March 25, 1888. Ten days later, Sarah was playing *La Dame aux Camélias* and *La Tosca* at Bordeaux. Thence she went on to Lisbon and Madrid. Next the indefatigable traveller began a French tour, under the management of M. Emile Simon, at Caen. In July she was in London playing *Francillon*, at the Lyceum, with indifferent success. She was soon off again, her life being now one incessant round of travel with brief stoppages in Paris. M. Maurice Grau was once more her manager, and she opened in October at Antwerp, after which she visited Liège, Amsterdam, the Hague, Rotterdam, Utrecht, Arnheim, Brussels, Vienna, Prague, Budapest, Bucharest, Constantinople, Cairo, and Alexandria.

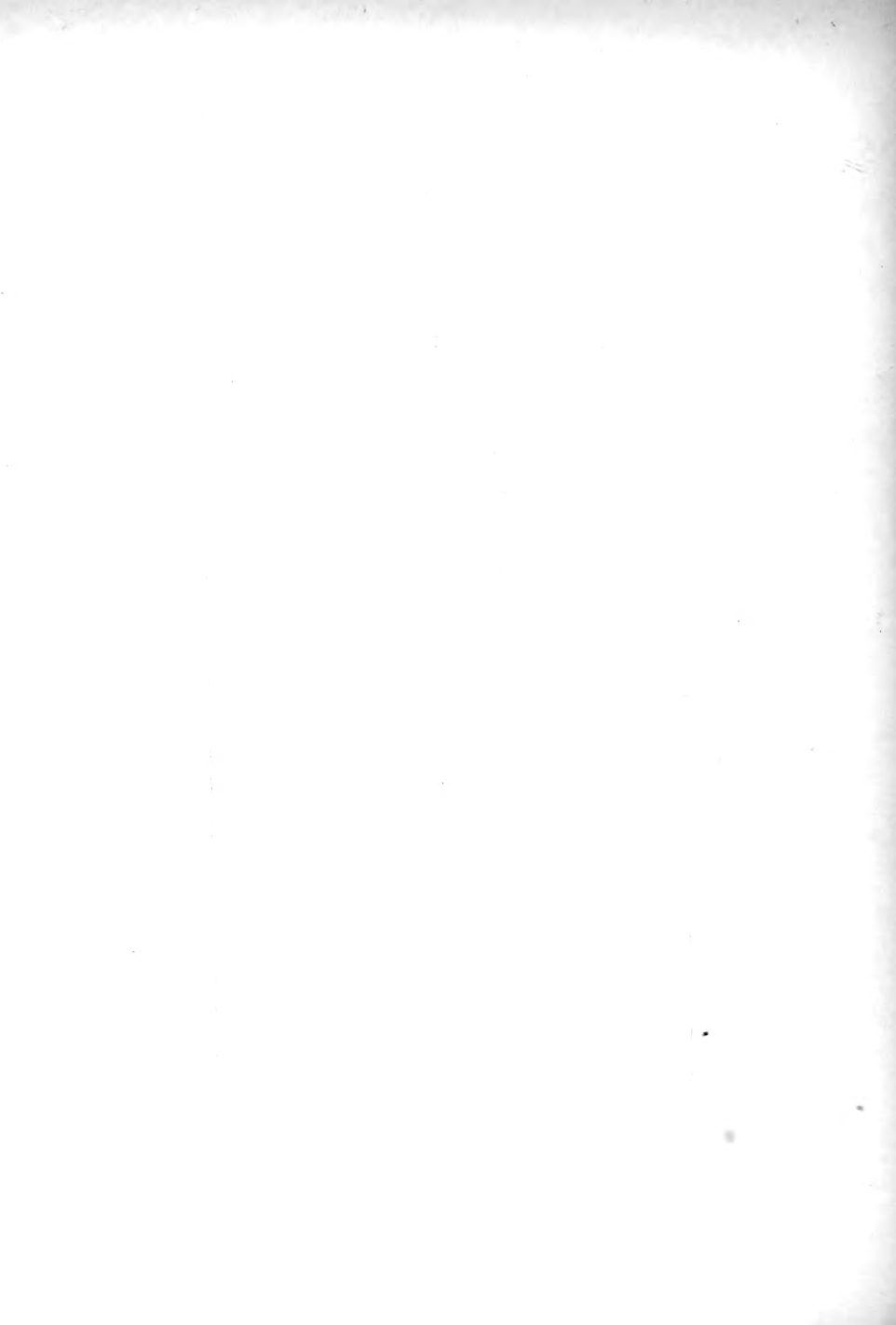
La Tosca was as great a favourite as it had been in Paris, but at the Hague the Huguenot scruples of the Dutch *bourgeois* led to the performance of the play being forbidden, on the ground that it contained attacks on Roman Catholicism which might prove offensive to persons of that religion. At Bucharest Sarah was received by Queen Natalie, who, living as she was in strict retirement, had been unable to attend any public performance in spite of her great desire to see the artiste. Sarah accordingly performed a scene from *La Dame aux Camélias* for her at the palace. When the actress uttered the words, "Shall fallen greatness never rise again?" Queen Natalie, who applied them to her own case, burst into tears. Every one present, including Sarah Bernhardt, shared the poor Queen's emotion, and the performance had to be interrupted.

From Bucharest Sarah went on to Italy, Russia, and Scandinavia, returning to Paris on the 21st March. Three weeks afterwards, without taking time for rest, she appeared at the Variétés in *Léna*, a piece adapted from the English by M. Pierre Berton, and in which she added another to the numerous kinds of death already on her list. The piece, however, was merely an ephemeral success, and was not a great triumph for its principal interpreter. M. Jules Lemaitre says—

Mme. Sarah Bernhardt played the earlier acts in a rather off-hand style. Her delivery was sometimes childish and lisping, and sometimes hard and guttural.



As Jeanne d'Arc.





Mme. Sarah Bernhardt on one of her tours.

On the 16th May, Sarah revived *La Dame aux Camélias* at the Variétés. In July she went to London, where she was received with the customary enthusiasm, and, the summer at an end, she reappeared on the 4th September at the Porte St. Martin theatre in *La Tosca*, in which she had triumphed two years before. A month later came another revival, *Théodora*, which furnished M. Sarcey with one more opportunity for lamenting—as, in fact, he had never ceased to do since Sarah's desertion of the Comédie Française—the injury her foreign tours had done her. Regardless of criticism and case-hardened by experience against the opinions of the Press, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt was devoting all her energies to the rehearsals of *Jeanne d'Arc*. Perhaps, however, she was not really far from agreeing with M. Sarcey. On the eve of one of her tours she remarked—

Really, I seem to be intended for the export trade! Success abroad is very nice, but success in France is still better.

She produced M. Jules Barbier's *Jeanne d'Arc* at the Porte St. Martin, on the 3rd January, 1890. The result was unanimously admitted to be all that could be desired. M. de Lapommeraye observed—

The entire performance was one continued triumph for Mme. Sarah Bernhardt, who sent a thrill of the noblest emotion and the keenest admiration through every heart.

According to M. Henry Bauer, "her success increased with every act and culminated in a brilliant triumph." "This woman has a power within her,"

exclaimed M. Jules Lemaitre. "It is impossible to see her without being moved to tears," said M. Sarcey. M. Vitu wrote—

She chiefly surprised every one, including her warmest admirers as well as her most prejudiced critics, by the extraordinary, passionate, irresistible force she imparted to the patriotic outbursts of the heroine. But everything, even praises, must have an end. What I have said is merely a summary of the expressed opinions of the entire audience last night, of what Paris will say in a few days, and of what every one will say in a few months when Paris and the world will have seen and applauded Sarah again and again in this the finest of all the fine creations of her career.

In July she was playing in London, and on the 23rd October she appeared at the Porte St. Martin in *Cléopâtre*, by MM. Sardou and Moreau. "What a wonderful actress she is!" exclaims M. de Lapommeraye. "She appears, she is seen and heard, and she triumphs."

"What a pity it is," regretfully says M. Bauer, "that her prodigious gifts, her art, and her powers of perception and expression should ever be wasted on M. Jules Barbier's verses, or on brigand stories in prose!"

M. Albert Wolff simply quivers with enthusiasm—

I have long felt that this rare artiste is not merely a great actress, but the only one of our time. She stands without a rival in the world. I have never seen Rachel, whose fame still excites Mme. Sarah Bernhardt to greater efforts even in the hour of her greatest triumphs, but I do not see how it can be possible for any one to have more talent than Sarah. Her evening ended in a perfect ovation.

She played *Cléopâtre* until the beginning of January 1891, and on the 23rd she set off for



As Cleopatra.



America and Australia, I went to see her a few days before her departure. I had already paid several visits about this time to her delightful sanctum in the Boulevard Pereire. She had been suffering from an affection of the larynx, and was hardly able to speak, and I had called to inquire after her health. To pass away the time while she disposed of her dressmakers, doctors, attorneys, and what not, I strolled up and down the well-known hall on the ground-floor—a hall quite unlike any other that I have ever seen. In the course of my many journalistic visits to the houses of Paris celebrities I have soon become indifferent to the cold and hollow display of official *salons*, to M. Renan's plain walnut-wood furniture, to M. Zola's somewhat discordant profusion of decoration, to Edmond de Goncourt's art-treasures, and to the solemn comfort of academic homes. I have viewed, without faltering, the gorgeous and imposing ceilings of the Hôtel d'Uzès, the pompous display of multi-millionaire financiers, the faintly pretentious coquetry of the popular actress's home, the frills and furbelows and knock-me-down eccentricities of our celebrated painters; but every time I enter what Sarah Bernhardt calls her studio, I am immediately struck by an indefinable something, infinitely pleasing, and not to be met with elsewhere. No doubt the sensation is partly physical and partly mental; it must arise from a combination of the perfumed atmosphere of the place, the ideally artistic arrangement and extra-

ordinary diversity of everything, the muffled foot-falls on the thick carpet, the subdued twittering of birds hidden in the foliage of rare and costly plants, the intoxicating play of colour on silk and velvet, the silent welcome of familiar animals, and above all, the voice and presence of the mistress of the house when she makes her appearance. But she is not yet here, and I resume my investigations. At the first glance it is difficult to see anything more than a delightful chaos of light and colour, an odd but harmonious profusion of the Oriental and the modern. Gradually the eye begins to distinguish surrounding objects. On the walls, which are hung with Turkey-red cotton, with a pattern of graceful plumes, are all sorts of queer weapons, Mexican sombreros, feather parasols, and trophies of lances, daggers, sabres, clubs, quivers and arrows, surmounted by hideous nightmare-like war-masks. Scattered about are bits of old pottery, Venice mirrors with wide frames of pale gold, and pictures by Clairin, some representing Sarah lying on a couch at full length, half hidden among her furs and brocaded coverings, others, her son Maurice and her big white greyhound.

Scattered about on stools, on settles, and on the edges of sundry small articles of furniture are swarms of Buddhas, Japanese monsters, rare Chinese curios, bits of pottery, enamel, lacquer, and ivory work, miniatures, ancient and modern bronzes. In a special case is a collection of valuable souvenirs :



[Vestibule of Mme. Sarah Bernhardt's studio.

gold vases, drinking-cups, liqueur-flasks, pyxes, beautifully carved golden wreaths, and exquisitely artistic gold and silver filigree. Flowers are on all sides : bunches of white lilac, Spanish lilies-of-the-valley, and mimosa, bouquets of roses and chrysanthemums, mingled with palms reaching to the glass ceiling. At the further end of the room is the big cage originally made for Tigrette—a tiger-cat brought home by Sarah from one of her voyages—and afterwards occupied by two lion-cubs, Scarpia and Justinian, reared in freedom but despatched to the menagerie immediately they displayed an intention of providing their own food. At present the wild animals' cage, with its closely-set bars, serves as an aviary. In it birds of brilliant plumage sing and disport themselves on the branches of an artificial tree. In the corner opposite the cage and on the right-hand side of the fire-place with its wrought-iron dogs, is a most magnificent, barbaric, disconcerting couch—an immense divan made out of a heap of white bear, beaver, eland, tiger, jaguar, buffalo, and even crocodile skins. The walls of this lair are also formed of thick furry skins, falling in luxuriant, enticing curves over the foot of the couch. Piles of faintly-tinted silk cushions lie scattered over the furs. The light falls from above through a canopy of colourless silk, embroidered with faded flowers and supported by two dragon-head standards. The floor is covered from end to end with Oriental carpets thickly strewn with skins. Jackals' and

hyenas' heads and panthers' paws meet the visitor at every step.

A servant interrupts my reflections and announces that Madame is waiting for me. I go up-stairs to the study, and find the illustrious actress in an ample cream cashmere *peignoir* trimmed with lace.

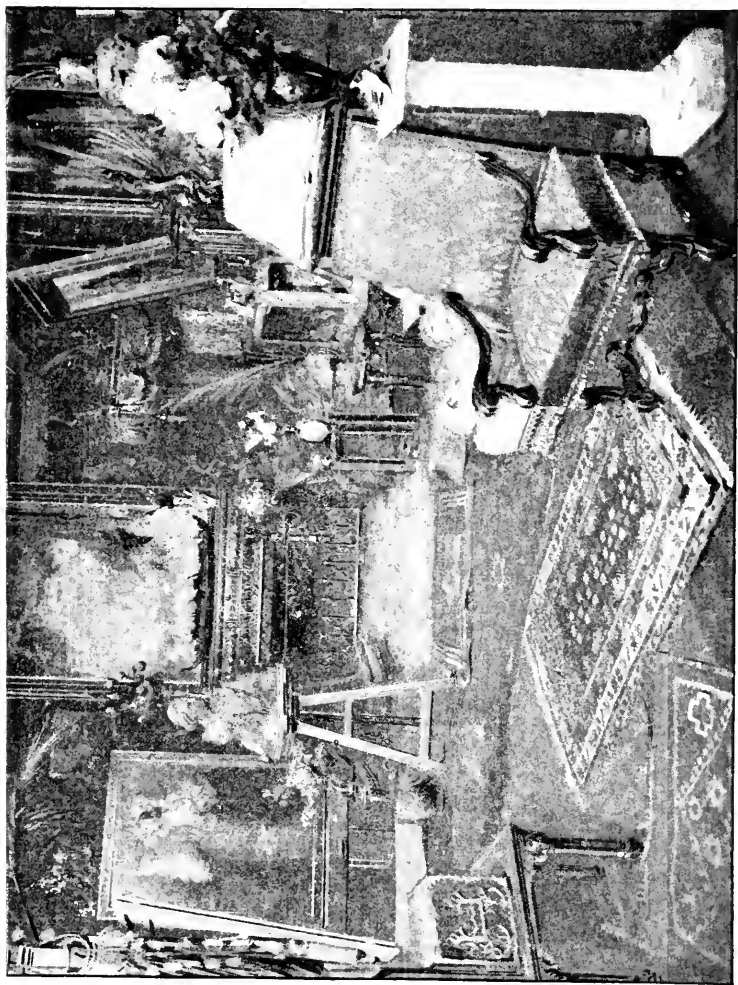
"I have just come out of my bath, and you must excuse me for keeping you waiting," she says, with an outstretched hand and a smile. "I can talk a little better to-day. What is it you want to know?"

"To begin with," I reply, "I should like to know the date of your departure and the extent of your tour?"

"You will find it all on this paper. I am sure I could not tell you all these things. On my tours I often take the train or steamer without even asking where I am going. What does it matter to me?"

I read as follows—

"Leave Paris, 23rd January, and Havre, 24th; arrive at New York, 1st February. New York, 1st February to 14th March; Washington, 16th to 21st March; Philadelphia, 23rd to 28th March; Boston, 30th March to 4th April; Montreal, 6th to 11th April; Detroit, Indianapolis, and St. Louis, 13th to 18th April; Denver, 20th to 22nd April; San Francisco, 24th April to 1st May. Leave San Francisco for Australia, 2nd May. Stay in Australia about three months. Open at Melbourne, 1st June; visit Sydney, Adelaide, and Brisbane, completing engagements at end of August. Return to



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt's drawing-room.

San Francisco, 28th September. Principal cities of the United States, then Mexico and Havana. Return to New York about 1st March, 1892. If business then better in South America, take the Argentine Republic, Uruguay, and Brazil in June, July, August, September, and October, 1892; London, January 1893; then Russia and European capitals."

"Two years!" I said. "Don't you feel sorry to think of leaving Paris for two years?"

"Not at all," replied the Bohemian genius. "Far from it; it is just the same thing as going to the Bois de Boulogne or the Odéon. I love travelling. I am delighted to be off, and full of joy to get back again. There is genuine and healthy excitement in moving from place to place and getting over so much ground. It never bores me, and then I haven't time to be bored. Just think—I have never stayed more than a fortnight in any one place! At the end of these two years I shall have gone half round the world. I know North America already, and I have been there twice; but this time we are going to Australia, which will be quite new to me. We shall stop at the Sandwich Islands and play before Queen Pomaré, at Honolulu. There's a novelty for you!"

"Won't you miss your home, your comforts, and your friends?"

"I shall have them all again when I come back, and my delight will be all the greater for being so

long deprived of them. And as for comfort, we travel like princes. Very often we have a special train for ourselves and our baggage. There is a big car, called the 'Sarah Bernhardt,' containing a fine bedroom, with a four-post bed, bath-room, drawing-room, and kitchen, all for me, and there are about thirty beds for the rest of the troupe. You see how convenient it is; and as the train is our own, we can stop when we like. When we come to a specially nice neighbourhood we leave the train, play ball games on the prairie, have pistol practice, and amuse ourselves generally. If we don't care to get off the train, we turn the beds up against the sides and have dancing with a piano. There is plenty of room, as we have three long cars joined together. You see, we don't suffer from *ennui*!"

"How do you spend your time on these long sea-voyages?"

"I play chess, draughts, and *nain jaune*. I don't care much for cards, but sometimes I play Chinese bezique, because it is very long, and passes the time. I am a very bad player, and I hate to lose—it enrages me. This is ridiculous and silly, I know, but there it is! I can't bear to be beaten!"

"What do you think of American scenery?"

"I don't like it. Everything is so big—too big in fact—nothing but mountains with tops that you can't see; steppes that stretch away to the horizon, immense trees and plants, and skies that



In La Dame de Chaland.

look ten times as high as ours. All these things have a supernatural effect, and when I come back Paris looks like a dear little trinket in a miniature case."

"And the public?"

"I can't call them anything but delightful! They adore me! In the principal American cities, every one of a certain class understands French, and as the prices are, of course, very high, the audience is largely composed of this class. In some places I have regular first-night audiences, who note the smallest effects and shades of diction."

"What about those who don't understand French?"

"They buy books containing the French text with the translation opposite. This has a curious effect; everybody turns over at the same time, and it sounds like a shower of rain a second long."

All these details, and the manner in which they were told, were very amusing. I could have gone on asking questions all night, but as it was becoming late I hastened to put my most inquisitive queries.

"How much baggage do you take?"

"About eighty trunks."

"Eighty?"

She laughed at my astonishment.

"Yes," she added, "there are at least forty-five cases of theatrical costumes. We take nearly two hundred and fifty pairs of shoes, and they fill one

entire trunk. There is one for linen, one for flowers, and one for perfumery, and others for my



As Pauline Blanchard.

dresses, hats, etc. I really don't know how my maid manages to find what she wants!"



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt and the painter Clairin.

"Would it be indiscreet to ask what payment you are to receive?"

"Not at all; there is no mystery about it. I get £120 for every performance, plus one-third of the receipts, which makes on the average a total of £240. Oh! I was forgetting: I am allowed £40 a week for hotel expenses."

In accordance with her programme, Sarah left on January 23 for her second tour in America. She followed the route given above, with the exception of Mexico and Havana, which she omitted. She was enthusiastically applauded almost everywhere. In Australia the excitement rose to a frenzy. Sydney was decorated with flags in her honour; she was received by members of the Colonial Cabinet; the horses were taken out of her carriage, she was borne in triumph, and official receptions were organized for her. At Sydney she appeared for the first time in *Pauline Blanchard*, by MM. Darmont and Humblot. On this occasion she also played *La Dame de Chaland*—a piece that has not yet been seen in France.

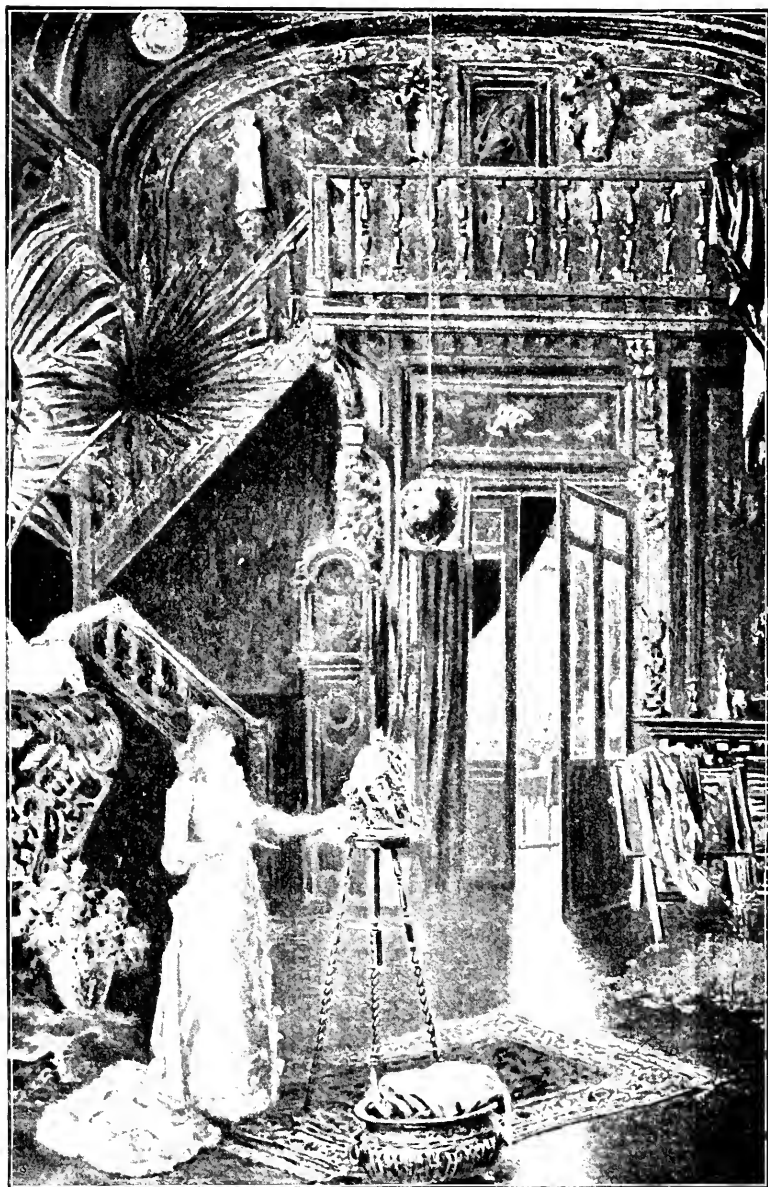
During her absence there was some talk of her returning to the House of Molière for the creation of *La Reine Juana*, by M. Parodi, the author of *Rome Vaincue*, in which she had scored so many triumphs. Her own plans, however, were different. She wanted to make her dream a reality: to be her own mistress and to work on her own account. Thus, barely a month after her return to Paris in

May 1892, she set off for London, returned to France, and started again on a tour through Russia



As Izeil.

and the Continental cities, such as Vienna, Copenhagen, Christiania, etc. It would take too long to



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt in her entrance-hall.

record the triumph she scored in this wild gallop across Europe. Back in Paris in March 1893, she immediately began to prepare for another tour in South America. On the 28th May she played *Phèdre* at the Vaudeville in aid of the funds of the Pouponnière, a charitable organization under the presidency of Mme. Georges Charpentier, wife of the well-known publisher. On the 24th May, through her American *impresarii*, Messrs. Abbey and Grau, she purchased the Renaissance theatre. Then came her tour through South America; dazzling success, big takings, and back to Paris.

Sarah Bernhardt was now at length installed in her own theatre, which she was to make her own in every sense, and which was destined to be for several years to come the scene of the finest experiments in dramatic art in all Paris—experiments carried out with a lavish disregard for everything except the interests of art. On the 6th November she opened the Renaissance with a four-act drama by M. Jules Lemaitre, *Les Rois*.

As one critic expressed it, the Renaissance was not a shop but almost a temple!

At last, exclaims M. Sarcey, we have seen the great and only Sarah again, and the Renaissance, under her management, has opened its doors with *Les Rois*. How splendid she was, and how she reminded us of the Sarah of her best days!

She reappeared in *La Dame aux Camélias* on the 16th December, and, according to the *Figaro*—

The interpretation of the play was admirable as far as Mme. Sarah Bernhardt was concerned. The performance was one of the great artiste's best.

M. Sarcey indulged in reminiscences—

I well remember the first occasion on which I saw Mme. Sarah Bernhardt as Marguerite Gauthier. It was in London, in 1881. She played the part on several consecutive evenings, and every time I was there, interested, delighted, and enthusiastic! The notices I wrote then were simply brimming over with admiration. The Parisians thought me slightly mad!

On the 24th January, 1894, *Izeïl*, by MM. Sylvestre and Morand, was brought out. Every act elicited enthusiastic applause from the public. Referring to Sarah, M. Jules Lemaitre wrote in the *Journal des Débats*—

We owe to her one of the strongest artistic impressions we have ever experienced. Is it a fact that, for reasons which MM. Sylvestre and Morand know as well as I, and which the reader can doubtless guess, her creative has had still more play than her artistic talent?

M. Sarcey says—

In this delightfully picturesque play she is herself the most delightful and most picturesque spectacle. She does not look thirty! The audience was at first quite overcome. Then there was a furious outburst of applause, and the house rose at her. What a triumph!

These extracts, which might be multiplied *ad infinitum*, show Sarah Bernhardt at her apogee. From this point her supremacy was undisputed, and any show of criticism was always tempered by admiring reservations. This was the attitude hence-



As Gismonda.

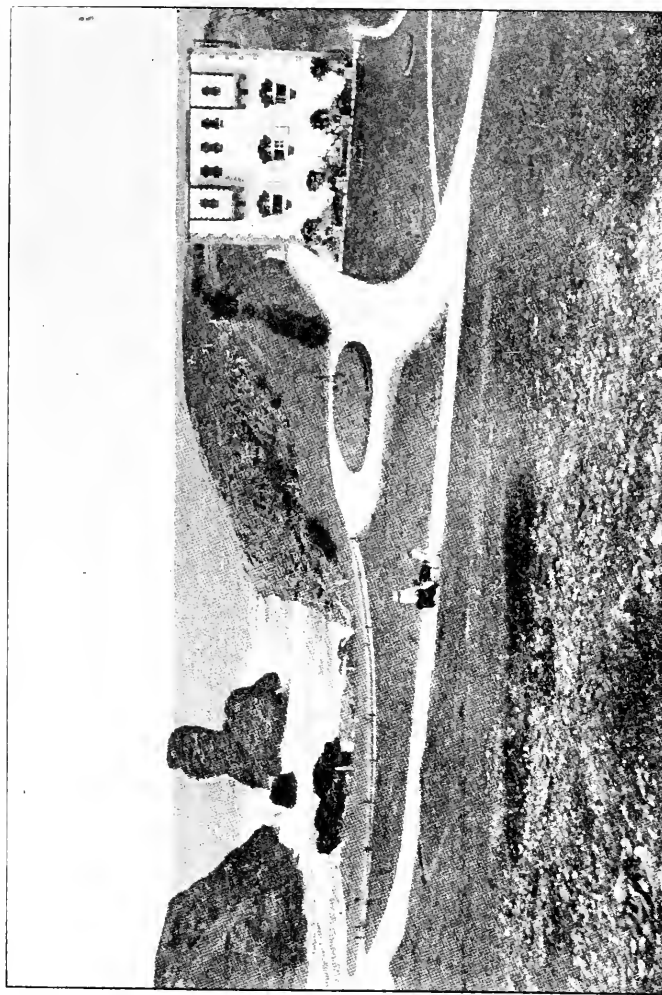
forth adopted by the entire Press in regard to her creations. *Fédora* was revived on the 3rd April, 1894. M. Lemaître remarks on it—

I am not quite sure whether Mme. Sarah Bernhardt can say "How do you do?" like any ordinary mortal. To be herself she must be extraordinary, and then she is incomparable.

Off to London in June, she played *Izeil* with tremendous success. On her return she gave *La Femme de Claude* on the 19th September. *Gismonda*, which she produced on the 1st November, elicited another poetical outburst of admiration in the Press. The *Figaro* speaks of her as attaining the perfection of her art. M. Bauer, in the *Echo de Paris*, calls *Gismonda* the most wonderful of all her creations. M. Lemaître, in the *Journal des Débats*, says that "as all the laudatory adjectives have already been used up in her service, it is difficult to express the adoration evoked by every fresh appearance of this extraordinary woman." M. Sarcey alone was rather reserved in his praise, and described her as having been applauded with more Italian than French exaggeration; but he amply atoned for this when Sarah revived *Phèdre* on the 24th December of the same year (1894).

What can I tell you of Sarah that you do not know already? Her acting is the summit of art. Our grandfathers used to speak with emotion of Talma and Mlle. Mars. I never saw either the one or the other, and I have barely any recollection of Rachel, but I do not believe that anything more original and more perfect than Mme. Sarah Bernhardt's performance on Wednesday has ever been seen in any theatre.

On the 11th February, 1895, came the revival of *Amphitryon*, with Coquelin, who unfortunately remained with her for only a brief period. M. Sarcey considered the performance wanting in life. The other critics treated it as a success for Sarah and Coquelin, but there was no enthusiasm. On the 15th February, *Magda*, by the German writer Sudermann, was produced. All the critics described her as admirable. On the 5th April, *La Princesse Lointaine*, by M. Edmond Rostand, proved an equally great success for poet and actress. To London and Scotland again, with *Gismonda*, *Izeïl*, *La Princesse Lointaine*, *La Tosca*, *Magda*, and *La Femme de Claude*. Then she made arrangements to produce *Amants*, by M. Maurice Donnay, for which she engaged Mme. Jeanne Granier. In the meantime what does Sarah do? Rest? Not at all. On the 5th January the *Figaro* announced her departure on that day for America, where she was to give a series of performances. She was back on the 4th July, 1896. She took two months' rest at Belle-Isle, and on the 30th September she revived *La Dame aux Camélias* with phenomenal success. On the 8th October she recited before the Tsar and Tsaritsa at Versailles. *Lorenzaccio*, adapted by M. Armand Dartois from Musset's poem, was produced on the 3rd December, and enabled Sarah to score yet another triumph.



The Fort-aux-Poulains, Belle Isle, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt's country residence.



“SARAH BERNHARDT’S DAY”

“SARAH BERNHARDT’S DAY”

ON the 8th February she brought out a piece by M. Sardou, *Spiritisme*. It was a failure. Sarah’s talents were extolled to the skies as usual, but in comparison with her previous appearances the reception of the play was cold. After twenty-five indifferent performances she was obliged to revive *La Tosca*, and then bring out a piece, *Snob*, by M. Gustave Guiches, in which there was no part for her. Easter week arrived, and she took advantage of it to give a series of performances of M. Rostand’s religious drama, *La Samaritaine*, which met with triumphal success. Says M. Sarcey—“Sarah, transfigured and drinking in the life-giving Word, and repeating the words ‘I am listening, I am listening’ with all a neophyte’s ardour, is a sight to be seen. Her personality completely fills the second act. Full of the divine fire, she evangelizes the crowd wherever she goes. Her success was very great.”

We now come to the great artiste’s most recent creations. Her dramatic genius found fresh expression in Octave Mirabeau’s fine social problem play,

Les Mauvais Bergers, brought out on the 15th December. After her appearance as a man in *Lorenzaccio*, and as a divinely inspired convert in *La Samaritaine*, here she was as one of the working-class, in a cotton blouse and woollen skirt. Next she gave Gabriel d'Annunzio's *Ville Morte*, and, rejuvenated and transfigured after her severe illness, she produced *Lysiane* by M. Romain Coolus in the spring of 1898.

Immediately after her triumph in *Lorenzaccio*, a few of Sarah Bernhardt's friends, headed by M. Henry Bauer, decided to organize a grand *fête* in her honour, to mark the apogee of her artistic career. Wednesday, 9th December, 1896, was fixed as the date. Shortly before the great day, I had requested Sarah to give herself up to one or two hours' solitude, to revive the memories of her emotions, struggles, and triumphs, and, in short, give the readers of the *Figaro* a glimpse into her mind on the eve of one of the most memorable events of her brilliant career. She sent me the following spontaneous and vigorous account of her meditations—

My dear friend, you are asking for nothing less than a full confession, but I have no hesitation in answering. I am proud and thoroughly happy at the prospect of the fête that is to be given me. You ask me to say whether I really and truly believe I deserve this honour. If I say Yes, you will think me very conceited. If I say No, you will set me down as

very blamable. I would rather tell you why I am so proud and happy. For twenty-nine years past I have given the public the vibrations of my soul, the pulsations of my heart, and the tears of my eyes. I have played one hundred and twelve parts. I have created thirty-eight new characters, sixteen of which are the work of poets. I have struggled like no other human being has struggled. My independence and hatred of deception have made me bitter enemies. I have overcome and pardoned those whom I condescended to encounter. They have become my friends. The mud thrown at me by others has fallen from me in dust, dried up by the scorching sun of my determination and faith in my own powers. I have ardently longed to climb the topmost pinnacle of my art. I have not yet reached it. By far the smaller part of my life remains for me to live, but what matters it! Every day brings me nearer to the realization of my dream. The hours that have flown away with my youth have left me my courage and cheerfulness, for my goal is unchanged, and I am marching towards it.

I have journeyed across the ocean, carrying with me my ideal of art, and the genius of my nation has triumphed. I have planted the French language in the heart of foreign literature, and this is my proudest achievement. My art has been the missionary whose efforts have made French the common speech of the younger generation. I know this to be true. Teachers in foreign countries have told me so, ladies in New York have confirmed it, the public has

proved it, and I have been openly blamed for my presumption by a German professor at Chicago. In Brazil, the students fought with drawn swords because an attempt was made to prevent them from shouting "Vive la France!" as they dragged my carriage along. In the Argentine Republic, the students tried to do honour to my country by learning passages from Racine, Corneille, Molière, and Jules Lemaître's critiques, all of which they recited most correctly and with scarcely any foreign accent. In Canada, my sledge was propelled by members of Parliament to the cry of "Vive la France!" and after every performance the students struck up the Marseillaise, listened to by the English, standing up, hat in hand, with their invariable respect for any noble expression of feeling.

Here is a typical incident. When I arrived in Australia, the French residents were dominated by the Germans. Our consul was neither liked nor esteemed. Immediately upon my arrival I was received by the mayor in his robes of office. His wife and children offered me flowers, and a military band played the national anthems of France and England. I owed this polite attention to orders from England. The effect was immediately felt, and this semi-royal reception was much to the benefit of our countrymen at Sydney and Melbourne. The plays performed by my company and myself met with wonderful success, and when the steamer which was conveying us back to the northern hemisphere fired

her parting gun, our own national anthem was sung by more than five thousand people massed on the quays. I assure you that those who witnessed that grand and heart-stirring scene have not forgotten it.

In Hungary, the towns in which I was to perform were decorated with French flags, in spite of orders from the Austrian Government. Czechs went through their national dances before me with red, white, and blue ribbons.

These are the trifling victories that have gained me so much indulgence. I say nothing of the encounters at which you and all the Paris public have been present. And now, after having finished my confession, I can still find one little circumstance in my own favour. Five months ago I refused an offer of a million francs to perform in Germany. If there be any carping critics to say the fête about to be given me is out of proportion to my talents, tell them I am the militant doyenne of a grand, inspiring, elevating form of art. Tell them French courtesy was never more manifest than when, desiring to honour the art of interpretation and raise the interpreter to the level of other creative artists, it selected a woman.

SARAH BERNHARDT.

December 8, 1896.

The promised *fête* took place on the following day, 9th December. It was a very fine one—much finer than any one could possibly have expected.

It was a charming, delightful festival under a grey wintry sky in the heart of Paris: an outburst of kindly feeling in the most artistic form. Some unsympathetic spirits had made merry over the programme, and it was asserted that the timid poets who were to appear would shrink from the critical gaze of Paris. Thanks to Sarah and the witchcraft of her grace and beauty, the ceremony was not only the greatest and most enviable triumph of her career, but it passed off with perfect harmony, in an atmosphere warm with cordiality and admiration.

The brief and hurried summary to which I am obliged to confine myself can give only a faint idea of those six hours of continuous ovations. Half-an-hour after noon Sarah arrived in her two-horse brougham with her son and daughter-in-law. As she appeared on the steps in the courtyard of the Grand Hôtel, cries of "*Vive Sarah!*" were heard, and the crowd of foreign visitors present spontaneously uncovered as the great artiste passed through them. The great Salle du Zodiaque, in which the banquet was held, was already full of guests, all in evening dress. When Mme. Sarah Bernhardt came down the narrow winding staircase leading from the first floor into the dining-room, every man and woman among the five hundred guests rose and frantically applauded again and again. The long train of her beautiful white dress, trimmed with English lace, embroidered with gold, and bordered with chinchilla, followed her like a graceful, tame serpent down the



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt, from a drawing by C. Léandre.

stairs. At every turn in the winding staircase she bent over the railing and twined her arm like an ivy-wreath round the velvet pillars while she acknowledged the acclamations with her disengaged hand. Her lithe and slender body scarcely seemed to touch the earth. She was wafted towards us as it were in a halo of glory. There was a continuous fire of applause from the whole assembly as she made her way to the presidential chair. She reached it very pale, but smiling and happy. Another thunderous outburst of cheers, and the meal began.

Sarah Bernhardt had M. Sardou on her right and M. Henry Bauer on her left. At the head table there were also Mme. de Najac, MM. François Coppée, H. de Bornier, Ludovic Halévy, Jules Lemaître, Théodore Dubois, André Theuriet, H. Lavedan, Albert Carré, Coquelin the elder, Edouard Colonne, and Gabriel Pierné; Mme. Maurice Bernhardt, MM. Mendès, Silvestre, Maurice Bernhardt, Lord and Lady Ribblesdale, MM. Jean Lorrain, Haraucourt, Charpentier, Comte Robert de Montesquiou, Clairin, Armand d'Artois, Morand, Silvain, and Edmond Rostand. At the other tables the guests took their places as best pleased them, without regard to the cards. There were three kinds of menus, designed by Mme. Abbéma, Chéret, and Mucha. The luncheon was a lively one. All eyes were fixed on the heroine of the feast. Every one was loud in wonder at the freshness of her colour and the per-

petual youth which she owes without doubt to the incomparable vital energy of her privileged nature. When the dessert was reached, M. Sardou rose and said—

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

I leave to the poets, whom we are to hear later on, the honour of extolling, better than I can do, the genius of the unrivalled artiste before us, the real creator of every one of her *rôles*, the acknowledged sovereign of dramatic art, and hailed as such throughout the world. My task is a humbler one. To every one of those who owe to her such keen emotions it is not given to see her in her home, among her children and her friends, and, after applauding the actress, to know the benevolence, the charity, and the exquisite kindness of the woman. To her I bear testimony, and wish her long life and prosperity, and I ask you all to drink to the health of her who is both the great and the good Sarah.

Terrific applause followed this last sentence, the ladies present being, if possible, more enthusiastic than the men. When silence was restored, Sarah rose and uttered these simple words—

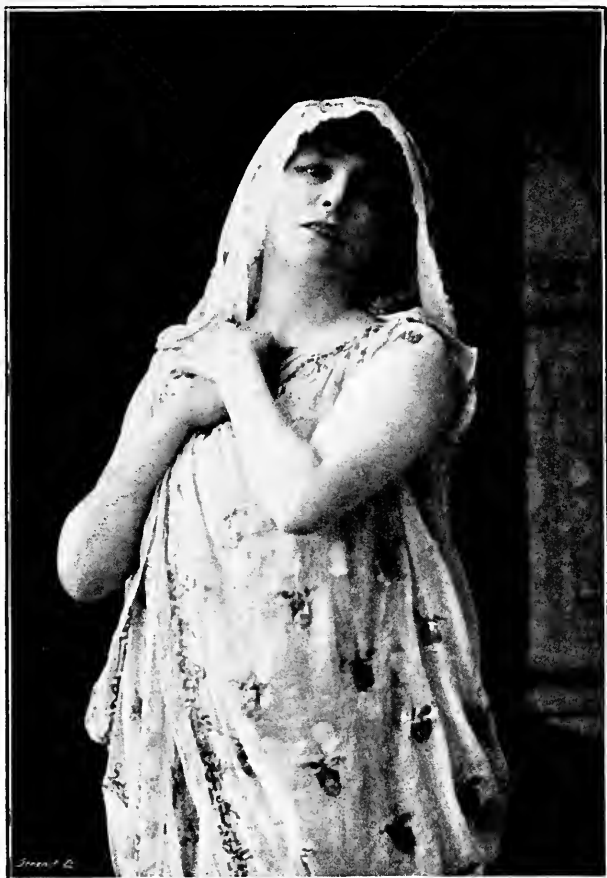
“To all of you, my friends, from the bottom of a grateful heart I say ‘Thank you! thank you!’”

Her hands, at first clasped upon her breast and then outstretched towards the guests, seemed to say—

“My heart, my whole heart is yours!”

Repeated volleys of applause followed. Tears coursed down the cheeks of many of the ladies. M. Sardou was seen to wipe his eyes. The emotion was truly great and general. The Colonne choir sang the chorus composed for the occasion by MM.

Armand Silvestre and Gabriel Pierné, and then the guests rose from the table. Mme. Sarah Bernhardt



As Phèdre.

left as she had come, shaking many a hand on the way, embracing Coquelin, stopping in front of Jeanne

Granier, kissing her twice and congratulating her on her triumph in *Amants*. As she went slowly up the winding stair, from time to time sending a smile or a wave of her hand to her admirers below, she seemed almost to be mounting in triumph towards the sky !

The next act in the great ceremony took place at the Renaissance theatre at half-past three. As was the case at the Grand Hôtel, mounted soldiers were posted outside to keep back the crowd assembled to watch the arrival of the guests. The house was crowded. Every one who had been at the luncheon was in attendance, and hundreds of others besides. Literally everybody in art, literature, and society was there. Greetings were exchanged on all sides, but, unlike most assemblies of this kind, the gathering did not display a trace of mockery or hostility. Everybody had come to do honour in real earnest to the great French tragedienne. The upper galleries were occupied by deputations from the students' associations, Polytechnic School, Conservatoire of Music and Declamation, School of Fine Arts, non-commissioned officers of the Paris garrison, etc. At a quarter to four the curtain rose on the third act of *Phèdre*, with M. Darmont as Hippolyte, Mlle. Seylor as Ismène, Mlle. Mellot as Aricie, and Mme. Grandet as Œnone. Sarah's entrance in her peplum and *mousseline de soie* veil, embroidered with gold, was the signal for thunders of applause. She spoke, she moaned, she sang, she called down



As Phèdre.



imprecations on her enemies' heads, and when, with a superb gesture, she bared her breast and declaimed—

“Voilà mon cœur. C'est là que ton bras doit frapper!”—

the ovation she received threatened to literally bring down the house. The same scenery was used, after the interval, for the fourth act of *Rome Vaincue*, by M. de Parodi. Enthusiasm rose to a still greater height when Postumia came forward, blind, in mourning garments, a halo of white hair about her brow. The whole audience was thrilled by her cries of anguish, the gestures of her hesitating arms, and the signs of grief upon her face. I saw all my neighbours shed tears.

After a second interval came the turn of the poets, who, according to the programme, were each to read a sonnet in honour of the artiste. There was a distinct thrill of curiosity among the audience. What would this apotheosis be like, and would the bold idea be carried out as it ought to be? At this moment I was in fear of seeing a smile—fear for the great and beloved artiste, and for the courageous poets whose grateful admiration was perhaps to expose them to the shafts of malice. The curtain rose again, and applause burst forth from every part of the house. Sarah, in her *Phèdre* dress, was seen seated in a chair of flowers beneath a canopy of green palms standing on a platform raised two steps above the stage. Her face, pale with emotion,

stood out against a background of red and white camellias. Amongst the palms were branches of orchids ; around Sarah, and at her feet, were her fellow-actresses, in plain white antique robes, with wreaths of roses on their brows, gazing at her with smiles of delight. On her right, and close to the scenery, were the five poets who were to celebrate her—MM. François Coppée, Edmond Haraucourt, Catulle Mendès, Edmond Rostand, and André Theuriet. Beside them was a deputation from the Students' Association. On the left were all the artistes of the Renaissance theatre. M. Paul Clerget, of the Renaissance, acted as master of the ceremonies. M. Paul Tixier, the President of the Students' Association, came forward and delivered a witty and tactful little address. M. Clerget then announced—

The poet, François Coppée.

As M. Coppée came forward, Sarah rose, and it was seen that the flowers suspended from the palms formed a wreath just above her head. Standing up, she listened to an indifferent sonnet. After reading his verses M. Coppée approached Mme. Sarah Bernhardt and kissed both her hands, but she, bending down towards the poet, offered him her cheeks to kiss. M. Mendès, M. Haraucourt, and M. André Theuriet then read their sonnets with the same simple ceremonial, amid applause. A sonnet by M. de Heredia, read by M. Morand, was not sufficiently audible. Finally, M. Edmond

Rostand came forward and recited the following verses in clear, resonant tones—

En ce temps sans beauté, seule encor tu nous restes
Sachant descendre, pâle, un grand escalier clair,
Ceindre un bandeau, porter un lys, brandir un fer.
Reine de l'attitude et Princesse des gestes.

En ce temps, sans folie, ardente, tu protestes !
Tu dis des vers. Tu meurs d'amour. Ton vol se perd.
Tu tends des bras de rêve, et puis des bras de chair.
Et quand Phèdre paraît, nous sommes tous incestes.

Avide de souffrir, tu t'ajoutas des cœurs ;
Nous avons vu couler—car ils coulent, tes pleurs !—
Toutes les larmes des nos âmes sur tes joues.

Mais aussi tu sais bien, Sarah, que quelquefois
Tu sens furtivement se poser, quand tu joues,
Les lèvres de Shakespeare aux bagues de tes doigts.

Long-continued applause greeted these beautiful verses, and it was felt that the greatest success of the occasion had fallen to M. Rostand. At this moment Sarah's emotion reached its height. She stood, with heaving breast, pale as the camellias about her. Her trembling lips endeavoured to shape themselves into a grateful smile, but the tears were gathering in her eyes. Her hands were clasped with all her strength over her heart as if to keep it from bursting forth. No spectacle could be finer than this woman, whose unconquerable energy had withstood the struggles and difficulties of a thirty-years career, standing overwhelmed

and vanquished by the power of a few lines of poetry delivered before these fifteen hundred enthusiastic auditors. Flowers from the topmost galleries fell on the stage, and with long-sustained cheers



Caricature of Mme. Sarah Bernhardt by Capiello.

the ceremony closed. Hundreds of friends, not content with applauding all day, invaded Mme. Sarah Bernhardt's room. More hand-clasps, embraces, and happy tears followed. M. and Mme.

Maurice Bernhardt were there, with swollen eyes but joyful faces. There was talk about imaginary difficulties raised by the Grand Chancellery of the Legion of Honour as an excuse for not decorating the great artiste. The Cabinet, it was said, would have to intervene, but it was generally thought that all difficulties would be overcome before the 1st of January. Besides, how could this decoration enhance such a demonstration as had just taken place? I am told that M. Poincaré, who was present, was consoled with on losing office, and replied, "If I regretted it at all I could not do so more than I do to-day." The letters and telegrams received during the day were handed round. Here are a few selected from the mass—

From EMMA CALVÉ (who had arrived in New York three days before).

Chère grande artiste, my heart is with you.

From Mme. RÉJANE.

MY DEAR SARAH,

The whole Vaudeville company are here to express their admiration for you. On their behalf I beg you to accept the accompanying flowers with the assurance of my deep affection.

RÉJANE.

Francavilla Mare.

From GABRIEL D'ANNUNZIO.

On this most glorious day a grateful Italy sends her wreath of laurel to the immortal enchantress. *Ave.*

GABRIEL D'ANNUNZIO.

London.

From Sir HENRY IRVING.

DEAR MADAME SARAH BERNHARDT,

Your brother and sister artistes of the Lyceum theatre send you their love and greeting. Your favourite art and all the arts do homage to you, and we your comrades in another land in which your genius is so highly esteemed are happy to add our tribute to the great honour you so well deserve.

Yours as ever, with affection and admiration,

HENRY IRVING.

[Appended were the signatures of Ellen Terry and thirty-four members of the Lyceum Company].

From Mr. WILSON BARRETT.

DEAR MADAME,

I send you a drawing of a silver wreath, which it will be my great pleasure to ask you to accept. The date of the *fête* to be given in your honour was so uncertain that the jewellers have not had time to finish the wreath, but I hope to be able to send it to you in a few days. Believe me, it is a pleasure to pay this small tribute to so great an artiste as yourself, and to one who has raised our profession to the high standard it now occupies. Kindly send me the names of the different parts created by you which you would like to have engraved on the leaves of the wreath. I have the honour to be

Your great admirer,

WILSON BARRETT.

A cable from CHICAGO.

Compliments of all the critics of the *Tribune*, *Times*, *Herald*, *Inter-Ocean*, *Post*, *Journal*, and *Dispatch*.

Another from NEW YORK.

The American Dramatic Authors' Club instructs me to offer its homage to the queen and sovereign, by divine right, of

the French stage, and to congratulate the Masters of the French drama who, thanks to Sarah Bernhardt, have secured a world-wide triumph for fine works, and have thus set back the boundaries of art.

BRONSON HOWARD,
President of the American Dramatic Authors' Club.

Other congratulations came from the St. James's and Criterion theatres, Mme. Melba, MM. Jean and Edouard de Reszké, Chartran, etc. Mme. Sarah Bernhardt spent the evening of this unique day at her son's house, among her relations and intimate friends.

On the 20th April, 1898, she scored a fresh triumph in *Lysiane*. M. Bauer wrote in the *Echo de Paris*—

Every new part in which Sarah Bernhardt appears is a new revelation of her talent. After accustoming us to expect sublime tragedy from her, she charms and delights us with light and delicate comedy touches and subtle shades of coquetry. How affectionately and joyfully the public greeted her ever-flowering genius! How well the clapping of hands and excitement aroused by her return to the stage showed the sympathy of Paris for her trials and sufferings!

M. Catulle Mendès, in the *Journal*, speaks of the extraordinary versatility of her talent and its unexpectedly new manifestations. She has always been subtle, tender, and ardent, he says, and yet in her *rôle* she exhibited these qualities in a different form.

After *Lysiane*, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt gave a series of performances of *La Dame aux Camélias*

and *La Samaritaine*. She then went to London in June on her annual visit, playing *Phèdre*, *Adrienne*



In *La Dame aux Camélias*.

Lecouvreur, and D'Annunzio's *Spring Morning's Dream*. July, August, and September she spent

at Belle-Isle-en-Mer. On the 28th October, 1898, she produced M. Mendès' *Médée*. It was a dead failure, in spite of all the great tragedienne's efforts. The unsatisfactory receipts obliged her to fall back on *La Dame aux Camélias*, of which she gave a few performances before leaving for Italy and the south of France on a tour she had been obliged to postpone a week before.

This brings us to the beginning of the year 1899. The Renaissance theatre had been prospering for five years. In it, as we have seen, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt had successively performed *Les Rois*, *La Dame aux Camélias*, *Phèdre*, *Izeïl*, *Fédora*, *La Femme de Claude*, *Gismonda*, *Magda*, *Amphitryon*, *L'Infidèle*, *La Princesse Lointaine*, *Lorenzaccio*, *La Tosca*, *La Samaritaine*, *Les Mauvais Bergers*, *La Ville Morte*, *Lysiane*, and *Médée*. The plays in which she did not appear were *Amants*, *La Figurante*, *La Meute*, *Snobs*, and *Affranchie*. Notwithstanding the success achieved, there was a feeling of restriction. The field of action was too limited. In spite of perfect prodigies of ingenuity, and the unsparing efforts of all Mme. Bernhardt's co-workers, great spectacular effects were impossible. Many new plays which the great artiste would have wished to produce could not be mounted satisfactorily at the Renaissance, and had to be left to rival theatres. The Théâtre des Nations, vacated by the removal of the Opéra Comique to its new quarters, tempted her, the 1900 Universal

Exhibition being at hand. She applied to the Municipal Council for the theatre, and obtained it. She opened on the 21st January with a revival of *La Tosca*. On the 8th March she reproduced Feuillet's *Dalila*, and, on the 25th, Rostand's *Samaritaine*, which seems to have taken the place of the *Dame aux Camélias* as general stand-by.

Mme. Sarah Bernhardt's appearance at the Théâtre des Nations marks the commencement of a new era in her artistic career. I have already said that the history of the arts affords no parallel to the life of Mme. Sarah Bernhardt, and I maintain that we can only bow with respect before the incomparable expenditure of vital energy which she has lavished throughout thirty years of intense and varied activity.

SARAH BERNHARDT'S 'HAMLET'



SARAH BERNHARDT'S 'HAMLET'

MADAME SARAH BERNHARDT'S appearance in a new French adaptation of *Hamlet* took place on Saturday, May 20. Her enterprise was distinctly a bold one. The series of performances would necessarily have to cease after June 6, in consequence of the actress' engagement to appear in London on the 8th. The play could hardly be expected to prove a success from the purely financial point of view. As one critic remarks, it is impossible to make Hamlet Parisian. Moreover, the production of M. Jean Aicard's version of *Othello* at the Comédie Française, a splendidly-mounted and finely-acted play, might fairly be thought to have taken off the edge of the public appetite for Shakespearian revivals in Paris. These considerations, however, did not deter Mme. Sarah Bernhardt. No one could ever accuse her of wanting the courage of her opinions. She made up her mind that Hamlet was a part for her to play, and she played it. She was not the first French actress to make the attempt. Mme. Judith and Mme.

Lerou had both played the Prince of Denmark with a fair amount of success, and much curiosity was felt as to Mme. Sarah Bernhardt's interpretation of the character. She had already given something like a foretaste of Hamlet in Lorenzaccio, and there are one or two weird incidents in her own career. She has been identified as the actress whom Edmond de Goncourt shows us, in *Faustine*, watching at a death-bed with professional curiosity, and afterwards utilizing the experience on the stage. Be this as it may, there is a touch of Hamlet's melancholy philosophy about her daily contact with her own coffin.

The translation of *Hamlet* has often tempted French literary skill. Dumas and Victor Hugo, each with the assistance of a collaborator, at different times rendered the play in French verse. The adaptation by MM. Samson and Cressonnois, in which Mme. Sarah Bernhardt appeared as Ophelia, was also entirely in verse. Then M. Theodore Reinach translated Shakespeare's verse into verse and prose into prose. The latest adaptation, carried out by MM. Morand and Schwob for Mme. Sarah Bernhardt, is wholly in prose, and is perhaps the most literal reproduction of the original ever attempted in France. It is so literal that in many cases the English word is used in preference to what might not be a close or satisfactory equivalent in French. Even Victor Hugo's version, which was accused of being more Shake-



The Queen, Mlle. Marcya.

Hamlet, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt.



spearian than Shakespeare, did not go as far as this in the effort for exactitude. As M. Henry Fouquier observes—

“Even in England, *Hamlet* is never played in its entirety. MM. Morand-Schwob have reduced the original thirty-two scenes to fifteen, but they have shown all possible respect for Shakespeare’s masterpiece, and of all translations made for the stage theirs retains most of the colour of the original, which can never be followed sufficiently closely in verse.”

Whatever may be thought of Sarah Bernhardt’s Hamlet in England, there can be no possible doubt that it has obtained her full honour in her own country. The Paris critics are not often in accord, but “when they do agree their unanimity is wonderful,” and in all the opinions which have been delivered on Mme. Sarah Bernhardt’s latest creation it is impossible to find anything but admiration. She accomplished the rare feat of satisfying every one by her impersonation of a character second to none in its capacity for exciting differences of opinion. There could be no better proof that the fire of genius burns as brightly as ever in Mme. Sarah Bernhardt. In the words of M. Edmond Rostand, who is conspicuous among French literary men for his admiration for Shakespeare—“She never did anything finer. She makes one understand Hamlet, and understand him beyond the possibility of doubt.”

M. Henry Fouquier, the eminent dramatic critic of the *Figaro*, says—

“The enthusiastic reception given to Mme. Sarah Bernhardt by the public on this occasion, a memorable one in the annals of the French stage, was largely due to her clear conception of the character. It was so thoroughly thought out, that Hamlet’s personality was made plain to the public without losing any of its mysterious features. It was said of her, with much truth, that she shed light on the darkness of Hamlet’s mind. She displayed all his contradictory characteristics, and at the same time showed that the contradiction was only apparent. Physically, she was an incarnation of the Hamlet created by Delacroix. Morally and intellectually she analyzed, synthetized, and condensed into one harmonious whole the most complex, if not the most obscure, character in dramatic literature. Her conception of Hamlet is that of Goethe, as we find it expressed in *Wilhelm Meister*. No one is better qualified to make us understand Hamlet than the creator of Faust. This character has more than one point of resemblance with Shakespeare’s hero, and has a ghost of his own in Mephistopheles, who urges him onward in spite of his scruples and the weakness of his nature. Hamlet, says Goethe, ‘is an oak planted in a valuable vase intended only for flowers. The tree puts forth its roots and shatters the vase. Thus does a pure, noble, and eminently moral nature, devoid of a hero’s physical

energy, perish under a burden it can neither sustain nor cast off.' ”

M. Gustave Larroumet, Permanent Secretary of the Academy of Fine Arts, who succeeded the late M. Sarcey as dramatic critic of the *Temps*, writes—

“I am not sufficiently ungrateful to consider that Mounet-Sully's Hamlet is completely eclipsed, as some well-meaning persons would have us believe. Mounet-Sully showed us a man of terrible but intermittent energy. Sarah Bernhardt gives us a youth under the influence of over-sensitive nerves. The great artiste was never greater. Her defects, such as they are, sink into insignificance before her brilliant talents. Her frequently hard and abrupt diction passed almost unperceived. She was moderate but powerful, ardent but restrained. She threw a flood of light on a particularly obscure character. I do not think that stage art could further go than when, in the play scene, Hamlet holds up a torch to the livid features of his father's murderer and puts him to flight, howling with terror.”

M. Emile Faguet, of the *Journal des Débats*, says—

“There are so many ways of playing this puzzling part that I shall not venture to criticize Mme. Sarah Bernhardt's rendering. She makes Hamlet sometimes weak and sometimes violent (the latter quality being much more manifest than the former), capricious, and a creature of nerves. The dreamy and melancholy part of Hamlet's temperament she leaves

in obscurity. Still, the result is acceptable. We cannot say either 'This is exactly as it should be,' or, 'This is not the thing at all.' It depends on one's point of view. In any case the attempt is interesting and the effect is incontestable. It is impossible to say that the interpretation is indifferent. One must go further and describe it as fascinating. It is something that must be seen. The question whether Hamlet can be played by a woman is now set at rest. It must be admitted that Hamlet, being, as he is, weak, violent, cunning, undecided, and constantly on the brink of losing his wits, is a feminine mind in the body of a young man. Hamlet's youth cannot be seriously disputed, and whenever we possess a great actress we can permit and even encourage her to try her hand on Hamlet."

M. Catulle Mendès, whose opinions, or rather his vigorous way of expressing them, earned him a duel with M. Georges Vanor, and a two-inch-deep puncture in the stomach, is the only critic to agree with the actress in regard to the simplicity of the character. He says—

"Rouvière played the part like an inspired epileptic, Rossi like a tenor, and Salvini like a philosopher. Mounet-Sully reproduced all the best features of previous Hamlets, and added some inspiration of his own. Now, for the first time, Hamlet stands revealed to us in his real simplicity, as the poet created him. As to Mme. Sarah Bernhardt, it is hard to conceive that any human creature



Mme. Sarah Bernhardt as Hamlet.



can combine so much instinct and innate intelligence with so much exact knowledge. Mme. Sarah Bernhardt is something more than an accomplished actress or an artist who plays upon the strings of our emotions. She is the incarnation of all gifts and all acquirements. She is the union, hitherto un hoped-for, of all inspiration and all art."

M. Lucien Muhlfeld, in the *Echo de Paris*, says—
"Mme. Sarah Bernhardt's Hamlet is a too learned, too bookish youth, urged to action by an impending calamity. He finds the weight of existence too great for his frail shoulders. To hear Hamlet's meditations on death through Mme. Sarah Bernhardt's lips is to realize all the vanity of life. She is the greatest of all actresses in the great dramatic masterpiece."

It is interesting to contrast Mme. Sarah Bernhardt's own opinions on Hamlet with the views expressed in the foregoing criticisms. In conversation with the writer, she scouted the idea that the Prince of Denmark is a complex personality. "I think his character," she said, "a perfectly simple one. He is brought face to face with a duty, and he determines to carry it out. All his philosophizing and temporary hesitation does not alter the basis of his character. His resolution swerves, but immediately returns to the channel he has marked out for it. I know this view is quite heterodox, but I maintain it." With a touch of characteristic determination, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt added—"It is

just as well to have a decided opinion of one's own, and adhere to it."

"Some critics have argued that Hamlet has a feminine side to his character, displayed in his alternate excitement and depression, his terrors and his touches of cruelty. Have you sought to develop this feature?"

"Not at all. That there may or may not be something of the woman about Hamlet, is a question which might give rise to a great deal of argument, but I think his character is essentially masculine, and I have endeavoured to represent it as such."

Further inquiry elicited the fact that Mme. Sarah Bernhardt had studied the play entirely from French versions, her acquaintance with English not permitting her to grapple with the difficulties of Shakespeare's text. Perhaps the clearness of French literary form may have revealed to her the hitherto unsuspected simplicity of Hamlet's character. At any rate, she does not accept the theory that Hamlet was insane. He was merely suffering, she thinks, from the bitterness of a wounded spirit; or, in other words, from that very English complaint, spleen. He thought himself deceived by all around him, and he suspected every one, but he was perfectly sane. Besides, a mad Hamlet would be mere melodrama. As to his age, Mme. Sarah Bernhardt does not agree with the theory that he was at least thirty. Twenty-five would be nearer the mark. In the play he is still a student. His friends are his seniors, and they

refer to him as "Young Hamlet." Polonius and the King speak to him in the semi-indulgent terms such as would be used towards a young man under such circumstances. The Grave-digger, it is true, speaks of Yorick's skull as having lain in the earth three-and-twenty years, but that is probably one of those slips from which the greatest authors are not free.

"Are you satisfied with the reception of the play?" I asked.

"Perfectly," Mme. Sarah Bernhardt replied; "and if the verdict is endorsed in London, I shall look back on Hamlet as the greatest success of my career."

In producing Shakespeare's masterpiece in the theatre she now occupies—a playhouse in the popular acceptance of the term—Mme. Sarah Bernhardt has not only scored a personal triumph, but is developing a work of education. She is offering the French public something far better and higher than they can see at any other theatre in their country; and at the same time she is carrying out an achievement which no other actress or any actor on the French stage could even attempt. In the words of M. Henry Fouquier—"Whilst the public always derives some benefit from a fine play, if only the vague conception of and desire for an intellectual existence on a higher plane than the sordid necessities of daily life, the actors themselves profit by an acquaintance with anything that is good and original in foreign master-pieces, alien though

they may seem to the genius of our race. We cannot too much admire those who, like Mme. Sarah Bernhardt, faithfully interpret the poetry of another people by the light of our own intellectual clearness."

G. A. R.

1899.

THE END



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